

INSIDE SOCCER

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THE QUALITY WEEKLY DEVOTED TO OZ SOCCER...

HENDO LOOKS AHEAD TO THE NEW SPIRIT YEAR. P.8



WHEN HARRY MET BERNIE

It's been another one of those weeks for Australian Soccer. Off-field dramas have taken the attention away from credible on-field performances. While our Olyroos were giving an English Premier League side a footballing lesson, Harry Kewell's absence from the squad (he has never actually played or trained with them) once again took precedence in the media.

The Socceroo star played in a Premiership match just days after the Olyroos went into camp ten days ago, but was reportedly too sore after that game and needed to rest his ankle.

Kewell's manager Bernie Mandic's subsequent comments that the player was not given advance notice, backed up by the Leeds striker's Sunday Telegraph column saying that he was given two days notice of the camp, were denied by Soccer Australia in an E-mailed press release. It said: 'The Australian camp has refuted suggestions ... that Harry Kewell was not informed of the current European Camp for the Olympic Soccer Team.'

'Soccer Australia abides by standard procedure when calling players into camp, with both the clubs of the 20 invitees and players advised by fax on August 6, more than three weeks prior to the European Camp.'

'Further, Bernie Mandic, Harry Kewell's Manager, was advised of the invitation verbally by Soccer Australia's Olympic Manager Peter Kelly three days after the initial correspondence.'

'Further follow-on correspondence was sent to Leeds United on 23rd August, due to the fact that neither the Club nor

the player had responded to the initial request, while the Clubs of the other 19 players had by this stage, all responded favourably to the initial correspondence.'

'Soccer Australia is disappointed with the remarks made by Mr. Mandic, and wishes to set the record straight.'

Mandic is currently overseas until September 20.

Yesterday Soccer Australia Chairman Basil Scarsella was in a conciliatory mood over the issue: 'As far as I am concerned Harry Kewell has proved he wants to play for Australia by making himself available for the Brazil tour.'

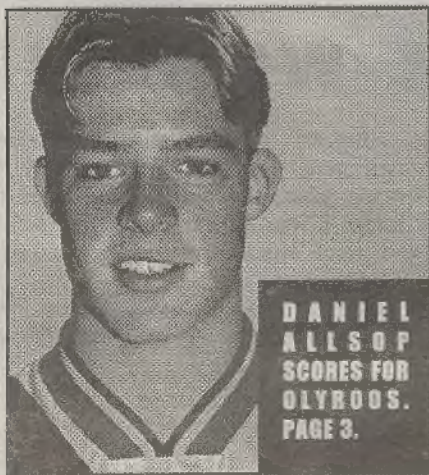
'I think what we have to do is to make sure that Soccer Australia in the future communicates well in advance with its players.'

'That is why Frank Farina is going overseas in the next couple of weeks to set out to the players his plans for the next two years or so. However, we are not going to be unreasonable with the players,' he said.

Reading between the lines it would seem that Scarsella believes we did not do enough to let Kewell know of this camp, seemingly contradicting the earlier Soccer Australia press release.

Other off-field issues include Ericsson's possible pulling out of NSL sponsorship and the NSL fixtures, which will be released in four-round increments on a fortnightly basis.

See inside for stories and analysis of these local issues and more, including how you can get your message to Harry Kewell, Mark Bosnich and our other Socceroo stars.



DANIEL
ALLSOP
SCORES FOR
OLYROOS.
PAGE 3.

**PLUS: SPEAK TO HARRY KEWELL YOURSELF!
THE OLYROOS' UK TRIUMPH P.3
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BILL TURNER CUP SPECIAL P.12 & 13**

MARCONI JUMPING ON MARKETING BANDWAGON

Today in Sydney's One World Sport bar Marconi Fairfield is unveiling their marketing plans for the new season. There has been much secrecy but we believe that they will officially change their name, logo and kit. There will also be large billboards erected around Sydney featuring players such as Pan-Keun Kim, Brad Maloney and Francis Awaritefe, thus emphasising their multi-cultural nature. They say it will be big, that it why we don't have anymore than that to tell you.

Parramatta Power will be playing a friendly against Penrith Panthers in Penrith this Thursday (9 Sep) at 7:45pm. Players who are under 16 and playing in the Nepean Association will have the opportunity to have a free Power season ticket. They will receive a form from their club in the next week. And will Power sign brilliant Lachlan Campbell, from the SA Premier League?? And this Wednesday afternoon the Power players are challenging the Eels players to a game of cricket on Parramatta Stadium. Mile Sterjovski doing a Warney? I gotta see that.

Sydney United have the following games coming up at Edensor Park: Wednesday 15 September, 7pm v Sydney Olympic, Sunday 19 September, 3pm v Newcastle Breakers. Entry is just \$5.

Perth Glory plays Parra Power at Litis Stadium (formerly the Velodrome) on September 12. In all, the Perth side will have five build-up games in preparation for its fourth season in the league, which starts with an away fixture at Gippsland Falcons.

The Glory will also play the State under-23 side in the Charity Shield on September 18 and Adelaide Force in Busselton on Sep 25 and the same side at Litis Stadium on September 27.

At His Majesty's Theatre in Perth, Glory have launched their new kit in dramatic fashion. Actors parodied passages from Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet as a lead in to it. Apparently one thespian was saying "Stange Stange where for art thou Stange."

The club has retained its predominant colours of purple and orange for the home strip, but the away top is predominantly white with a strip of purple and orange down one side (pictured). There has already been 1200 advance orders for the playing tops.

To be or not to be a bumper year at Glory, my Lord doth think it so.



ERICSSON UNHAPPY WITH MEDIA COVERAGE

Soccer Australia Chairman Basil Scarsella has agreed that there are problems with the Ericsson sponsorship of the NSL, saying that the issue is the use of Ericsson when referring to the NSL, and not one of TV coverage.

"The Ericsson sponsorship has one year to go. I think it would be fair to say there were some problems in relation to the media not using the name Ericsson Cup enough when referring to the NSL.

"They weren't happy, we are currently working through these problems with them and we are expecting a resolution of sorts," said Scarsella.

Print media reports in Sydney over the weekend suggested Ericsson was ready to pull out.

A prominent media soccer identity recently said me: "why the f*** should we have to call it the Ericsson Cup. If they want that, they have to pay for it!"

Scarsella added: "I don't think it is directed to any particular media. I don't think the TV coverage has been an issue it has simply been the name situation ... although it would be unreasonable of me to name any particular media."



It is known that if the marketing rights of the NSL are won by the Rivkin Entertainment bid, and this is clearly on the cards, then they should be able to find a replacement sponsor for the NSL.

On another issue and the situation with Adelaide's Southern Stars and their viability in the Ericsson Cup (or is that the Rivkin Cup??) was batted away by Scarsella. "Their's is a situation with the deed of arrangement that is essentially nothing to do with Soccer Australia and indeed we don't want to be involved."

"It's a matter for the club and the administrator," he said.



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SOUTH RECEIVES GOVT GRANT FOR YOUTH

As part of the state government's Vicsafe START Youth Sport Role Model Program, South Melbourne has been given an \$8,000 grant.

Popular midfielder David Clarkson has been asked to coordinate the program, which will enable the club to hold coaching clinics and workshops focusing on schools in both metropolitan and rural areas.

The presentation was made by Peter Katsambanis, the Member for Monash Province.

'David and the other South Melbourne

Soccer Club players are not only champion sportsmen, but they are also great role models for young people,' said Mr Katsambanis.

It is hoped that the players can help, through coaching clinics, provide a positive message to youngster.

A pitch for the Greek vote at the coming state election? Some may view it this way, but still it is heartening that our players can put back into the community through this grant, and there is no finer example than David Clarkson.



South's David Clarkson with the Member for Monash Province Peter Katsambanis.

IN THIS WEEK'S Inside Soccer

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WE ARE THE WORLD!

Courtesy of one of the internet chat lists, here is a story that encapsulates perfectly the Global Game ...

I went trekking in the north of Thailand, right up in the mountains of the golden triangle. We passed through tiny hill tribe villages - one of the villages had only eight families in it. It took us two days trekking to get there. On the second day we passed a rice paddy and there were some men working in the field.

The guide asked them a question in

one of the hill tribe languages. Our guide seemed quite pleased with the reply. I asked him what he had asked the workers. He said: "I was asking how Manchester United went against arsenal." I asked, "how did they go?"

He said "Man United 2-1, but the worker didn't know who scored the second goal."

I was stunned.

Football IS the universal language.

FOX THE STAR OF DAZZLING OLYROOS

ENGLISH PRESS SMITTEN WITH OUR RAMPAGING OLYROOS

Who needs Harry Kewell? That would seem to be the case for our Olyroos one year out from the Olympics after destroying English Premier League side Southampton 4-1 at Staplewood mid-week. The local media, particularly the Southern Daily Echo, was lavish in their praise of our team.

'For the first half of the game Saints, with James Beattie, David Hughes and Chris Marsden easing their way from injury, tried manfully to match the dazzling inter-play of the Socceroos.

'But as the temperatures soared the young Aussies simply got hotter and Saints, with a few men short of match fitness, wilted,' said the paper.

Reports in Australia that Southampton were understrength were somewhat misguided. The Saints XI was made up of seven players with first team experience, Southampton's England star Matt Le Tissier however was rested for this game after picking up an injury.

Saints got to the break on level terms, with Hughes cancelling out a 12th-minute strike from Kosta Salapasisidis, but

the Aussies took complete control in the second-half.

They added three more goals, could comfortably have had six, and retained their togetherness despite a deluge of second-half substitutions.

Goodness knows what the score may have been if Harry Kewell and Kasey Wehrman were in the side.

It was a difficult game for trialist Mark Bentley from Aldershot to make any kind of impression on the right side of the Saints midfield. But for Hughes, there was the satisfaction of a 17th-minute goal, the result of a neat interchange with John Beresford and a deft body swerve round the keeper.

Australia's dominance of possession meant that Beattie was generally starved of service although he did get one clear sight of goal, only to hit a lame shot straight into the hands of Danny Milosevic. Dani Rodrigues later missed out in a one-on-one with the keeper.

Stout defensive work by Scott Hiley and Gary Monk kept Saints on terms going into the break but after the impressive Brett Emerton had put in Millwall's Lucas Neill for the second goal on 47 minutes, Saints crumbled.

Manchester City's Danny Allsop made it three within minutes of coming in as substitute and Australia's centre-half Hayden Foxe, by far and away the best player on the park, stamped his mark with a searing drive from the edge of the box after a well-worked corner involving Nick Rizzo.

Apparently Saints boss David Jones made his retreat before the ref blew the last whistle. Coach Dennis Rofe spoke up on his behalf and pulled no punches. "The only good thing to come out of the game was that James, Chris and David came through okay. They were a good side; it's a pity we weren't up to giving them a better game."

The paper concluded by saying that Foxe was good enough for the Premier. 'Their status in world football is moving up by leaps and bounds, their players are technically strong and their team-play is superbly integrated.

'The performance of red-haired centre-half Hayden Foxe must have given



Olyroo star Hayden Foxe ... wowed the press in England with a superb performance against Southampton.

the Saints management food for thought.

'The all-round skills of a young man who plays his football for Sanfrecce Hiroshima in Japan were quite awesome at Marchwood. Asked where Foxe plays his football, one of the Australian coaches

of football, an exciting brand of football, they've slotted together very well, and this was an ideal game to prepare for the international against Kuwait's Olympic team."

This week the Olyroos play Kuwait U/23.

AUSTRALIA U/23 4
(K Salapasisidis 12', L Neil 47', D Allsop 60', H Foxe 65')
SOUTHAMPTON 1
(Hughes 17')

SAINTS XI: Ziegler, Hiley, Bridge, Hughes, Marshall, Monk, Bentley, Rodrigues, Beattie, Marsden, Beresford. Subs used: Dryden, Gibbens, Bradley, Sims

AUSTRALIAN XI: D Milosevic (P Zois 45'), L Neil (R Bove 75'), C Blatsis, H Foxe, S Laybutt, T Baser, J Culina (M Bresciano 55'), B Damianos (M Robertson 78'), B Emerton (C Zane 78'), K Salapasisidis (D Allsop 55'), N Rizzo (J Burns 75')

REFEREE: R Styles (Waterlooville).

'Their players are technically strong and their team-play is superbly integrated.'

UK press on our Olyroos.

answered: "He plays in Japan but he should be playing for Real Madrid." You wouldn't disagree with him on this show,' concluded a very impressed local media.

"We were expecting this to be a hard game and that's exactly what we got, so I am very pleased with today's result," said coach Raul Blanco after the game to Soccer Australia.

"The boys played an excellent game



Crystal Palace's Nick Rizzo. Another of the star performers in our Olyroo side.

PARRAMATTA POWER TICKETS ON SALE TOMORROW

Seaon tickets for Parramatta Power's first season in the NSL go on sale as of tomorrow Wednesday September 8. Season tickets in the grandstand are being let go for only \$250, and this covers the 16 home games plus free merchandise and membership, with a total value of \$368.

The club is also forming three supporters clubs, catering for adults (\$30), teenagers (\$25) and kids (\$10).

These memberships are also available from this Wednesday at 9am.

So to get one of these offers for yourself, or it may be as a gift to someone else, just go down to Power's Soccer Office at 10 Grose Street North Parramatta (it is right next to the Leagues Club). For more info call their office on 9630 9777.

Don't miss out.

There is a charity event happening in Melbourne on September 17. In aid of the Victoria Police Blue Ribbon Foundation, there will be a Charity Soccer Trivia Night, hosted by Melbourne Radio's favourite Soccer scribes, The Four Diegos.

The venue will be at Champions Sports Bar, at the Bob Jane Stadium, commencing at 7.30pm. The cost is only \$15, and there is finger food and drinks are at bar prices. For bookings contact 0414 245 576 and speak to Thalys.

All proceeds go to a good cause so get down there for a fun night.

For all the Blue Ribbon Cup action see the Australian section of this issue, and for comment on the league's tardiness in producing a fixture schedule, see page 11 for Alan Clark's commentary.

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THE NSW CARTY/FORSYTH MEMORIAL CUP

LACK OF SPIRIT AS WOLVES POUNCE

By Steven Webb

Aspectacular 25th minute strike from Esala Masi was enough for Wolves to defeat Northern Spirit and put the Wollongong side through to the final of the David Carty and Peter Forsyth Cup on September 19.

Masi, who used two earlier attempts to get his eye in, blasted a shot from 25 metres across the Spirit goal, onto the inside of the upright, leaving goalkeeper John Perosh stranded.

After an even first half, Wollongong dominated a depleted and lacklustre Northern Spirit and should have scored more goals in the second period.

With Zane, Seal, Slater and Crook unavailable Spirit relied on young players and former Wolf Tony Perinich for spark.

Early chances came Spirit's way. One forcing the almost faultless Daniel Beltrame into a diving fisted save and another, from a Perinich header, sailing over the bar. Troy Cranney initially seemed a match for Scott Chipperfield's speed down Wolves' left flank. Chipperfield dropped deeper, playing pointless long balls to the vacant wing.

Antonio Faria, on Spirit's left wing, in the first half kept Wolves' Matt Horsley busy, sometimes beating him and getting his crosses over.

Adam Snyder, on the other wing, also gave Beltrame some catching practice.

Robbie Enes was carried off with an ankle injury that could keep him off the pitch for a week or more.

His replacement, Paul Bilokapic, looked lost. Casserly played well. Lyons and, later, Snyder were liabilities.

Without Perinich and Enes in the second half, Spirit had no ideas. Wolves could afford to miss chances. Masi failed to make the most of a free header from a Paul Reid corner.

Saso Petrovski glanced a Horsley cross wide and twice worked his way into the Northern Spirit penalty area, jinking through the defence, without releasing a shot. (Wolves in the second half were often reminiscent of my son's under-10 team against lesser opponents, with apparently blinkered stars always wanting to keep the ball to themselves!).

George Souris, again reliable, once had to make a desperate tackle to concede a corner after a dangerous ball sliced through the Wolves penalty area. The corner, however, was cleared, eventually giving Chipperfield, with a clear run on goal, the opportunity to throw away the best chance of the game.

Northern Spirit may not be too worried by this result. But Wollongong surely will use it to build their confidence, particu-

larly since the "Wolves Wall" has again resisted penetration.

Northern Spirit: Perosh, Bingley, Casserly, Rudan, Lyons, Cranney, Enes (Bilokapic 33), Cunico, Perinich (Ryan Griffiths 45), Faria (Langdon 62), Snyder.

Wollongong Wolves: Beltrame, Souris, Stanton, Horsley, Dimoski (Dimech 57), Chipperfield, Harlock, Spencer (Reid 45), Petrovski, Huxley (Surjan 72), Masi (Zelvis 75).

And Paul Goodwin reports that last Friday night at the Narrabeen home of the NSW Academy of Sport, Northern Spirit defeated a representative Manly-Warringah District side 3-0, having led 1-0 at half time.

Information on the game came from Spirit supporter Anthony Bross who was in attendance.

Urged on by a crowd of over a thousand vocal supporters, Spirit's younger brigade gave a good account of themselves with newcomer Dean Culina standing out, especially in the first half, with some excellent distribution and resolute defending.

Spirit took an 11th minute lead when Simon Catanzaro threaded the ball through for Ryan Griffiths to go on and beat the keeper with a cool finish. Griffiths and his brother Adam were both on top of the their form in the match.

The second half was only ten minutes old when former Manly man Phil Moss took great satisfaction in thumping a 30 yard free kick past the keeper for a 2-0 lead, a rare goal for the club's Youth Development officer.

Adam Snyder scored the third, in the 61st, when he made good use of a fairly ordinary pass from Catanzaro, to run through the defence and slip the ball under the keeper, after which the team made three substitutions and then kept control until the end.

The Manly side was restricted to four shots on goal, but should have done better with at least two of them, poor finishing letting them down. They battled away but were no match for a well drilled Spirit side.

For Spirit Jack Sobczyk and Snyder both had sound games while Moss will dine out on THAT goal for some time.

Spirit lined up as follows:
Henderson (Perosh 46), Moss, Dean Culina, Elvis Olic (Michael Prentice 64) Sobczyk (Jason Hamilton 64), Langdon (Simon Miller 55), Adam Griffiths, Wearne, Catanzaro, Ryan Griffiths, Snyder

Spirit complete their programme of matches against each of the local districts which support them, as feeders through their juniors, when they play Gladesville-Hornsby at Christie Park next Friday night. They earlier beat a Ku-ring-gal Select team 5-1.

KIM'S MISS COSTS MARCONI

By Michael Reeves

For the second time this off-season Sydney Olympic has come from a goal down against Marconi at Marconi Stadium and defeated the Stallions.

This match was the second semi final of the Forsyth McCarty Cup and an entertaining game.

It ended 1-1 and went to penalties where Pan-Keun Kim was the only man to miss, handing the shootout to Olympic.

The game had started well enough for the home side. Romanian trialist Stanici was put into a virtually empty goal-mouth only to see his shot turned away at the very last moment by Jim Kourtis in the Olympic goal.

Ten minutes later, in the 26th minute, a poor challenge from Scott Thomas earned Marconi a free kick on the left side of the field near the goal line. Brad Maloney's free kick was headed to the far post by Kris Trajanovski and Dominic Longo was there to head home.

In the next period Olympic had more of the play and both Gabriel Mendez and Scott Thomas had good chances.

Three minutes into the second stanza Darren McDonald's shot was parried by Kourtis with the rebound falling to Christian Care who's shot was also deflected.

Care retrieved the ball once more and his second shot was just cleared off the line by Ante Juric.

Olympic tried to keep up the pressure and twenty minutes from time Dominic Longo gifted a ball to Olympic and Pablo Cardozo converted the chance to bring the score back to level terms.

The two teams did not hit the back of the net again and the game went to penalties which saw Sydney Olympic convert their allotted five, and that, coupled with Kim's miss, handed them a place in the final against Wollongong.

In other news in the NSL, some of the youngsters released by Marconi may be heading Syd Utd's way (such as Michael Galluzzo, Joe Bruni and Victor Tomasevic).

Francis Awaritefe is going nowhere in fact he is a big part of the club's marketing campaign which is being announced today.

And after a clash with Alex Tobin last week Harry Karl has actually lost two teeth - the newly signed Marconi player has one front tooth left!

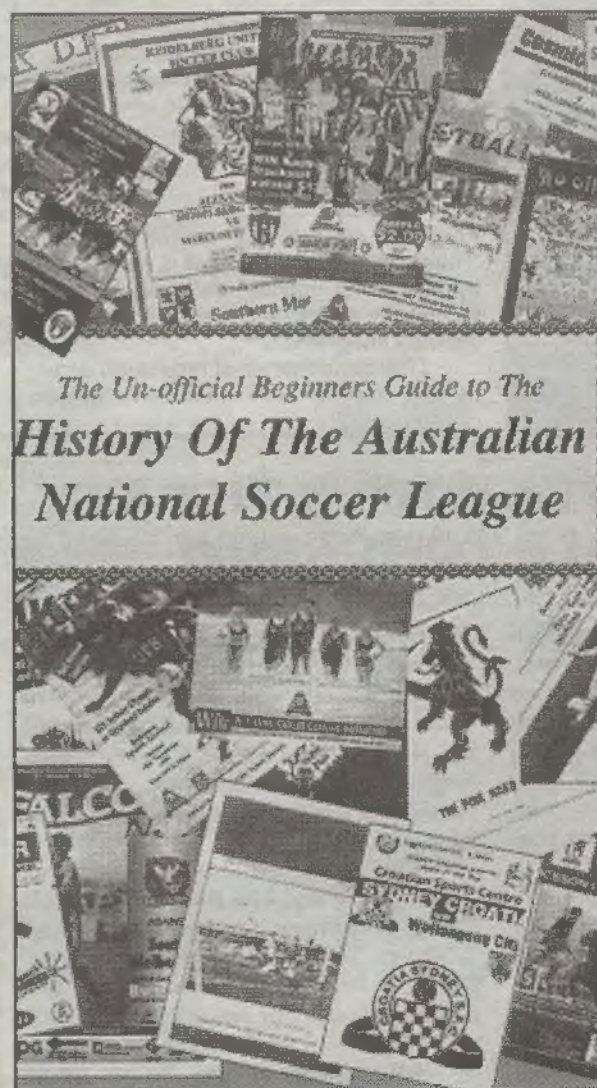
Stuart Slater, formerly of West Ham, Celtic and Watford, made an immediate impression in his Carlton debut last week in a 4-2 win over Oakleigh.

Slater, along with Mick Conroy, John Markovski and Con Anthopoulos joined the Carlton Academy team for the hit-out and, according to Carlton sources, it was Slater who impressed with his excellent passing and crossing, together with tremendous vision and overall distribution.

Scorers for Carlton were Conroy, Moutsopoulos, Pongho and Tolios.



Marconi's central defender Mark Babic (left) and Francis Awaritefe. Despite reports saying he may leave, we believe he isn't going.



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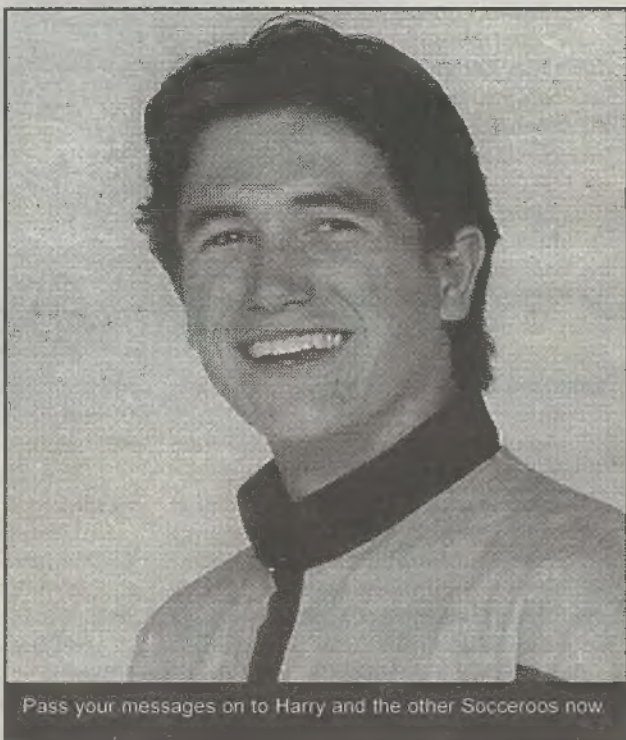
Of course you would want to. And what about Mark Bosnich, Mark Viduka, John Aloisi, Paul Okon and Ned Zelic. As you are all aware, Frank Farina is meeting with the overseas-based players in the UK in early October.

Frank thought it might be timely to give the players an idea of the depth of feeling there exists amongst fans about us getting to the next World Cup — so they know that it's not only players who feel that way too, and the extent to which we support them.

His view is that players are just not aware of the depth of passion amongst Australian supporters.

So, if you would like the opportunity to 'speak' to the OS players, this is it!

Please e-mail your message/thoughts/whatever to Bonnie Mersiadis (either on-list or to bon@webcity.com.au) by 24 September and they will all be passed to Frank who will take them with him. (Please try to limit your contributions to one A4 page in



Pass your messages on to Harry and the other Socceroos now

length when printed.)

And still on the Socceroos, the rumour is that they will tour Chile in February 2000. Also a Northern Spirit staff member will become Socceroo team manager?

Remember Mike Panopoulos? He used to play at Heidelberg but

has been in Greece with Aris these last few years. The 22-year-old is now a strong possibility to sign with Portsmouth in England, according to UK reports. Pompey manager Alan Ball went on a spying mission to Greece and liked the player. Ball later said: 'I was pleased with what I saw ... he would be a good addition.'

WIN YOUR OWN SOCCER CD

Win a copy of Ice Cream Headache's latest CD - The Canberra Cosmos Supporters' Anthem & Chants!

Peter Bayliss (second from left) is the lead singer and bass player of top band Ice Cream Headache. A first name is common to each of the others in the photo: lead guitarist Cole, drummer Price and keyboard star Staff.

Tick which one it is:



- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diego | <input type="checkbox"/> Franz |
| <input type="checkbox"/> David | <input type="checkbox"/> Edison |

Clues: Cosmos player Arrautz, Parramatta Power coach Mitchell and Spurs star Lincoln share that first name too!

To enter:

Make your selection, cut out the coupon and post to: ICH CD Competition 1/24 Prince William Drive, Seven Hills NSW 2147. You don't have to be a Canberra resident to win!

The first correct entry drawn on Friday Oct 1 will win the CD (above) signed by Ice Cream Headache and songwriter Chris Kunz.

The winner will be announced in the Inside Soccer issue of Oct 5.

WE HAVE A WINNER!

FARINA



FRANK FARINA
Soccer's playing history

The Frank Farina book competition is now over. We have drawn the winner and we will send out the book today (Tuesday Sep 7). Thanks for all those who wrote in and look out for our other promotions coming up.

The winner of the autographed Frank Farina book MY WORLD IS ROUND is

Gavin Clarke,
41 Merle St
Bass Hill,
NSW 2197

Young Socceroos.
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Read all about it.

MY WORLD IS ROUND
Frank Farina's personal playing history

CLASS ALL THE WAY FROM SOUTH AND CARLTON

By Mark Fisher

The second round of the Blue Ribbon Cup was held at the Epping Soccer Stadium in Melbourne's north last Sunday -- the impressive new home ground of Victorian Premier League club, the Melbourne Raiders. Despite inclement weather, about 1500 spectators were entertained by a deluge of goals in both the second match between Carlton and the Gippsland Falcons, and the third match, with South Melbourne taking on the Melbourne Knights.

The opening game featured a



South's Rober Liparotti against Knights last Sunday

Victorian Police Representative team up against their NSW counterparts. The score was tied at 1-1 after 90 minutes, but the Victorian Police secured victory by winning 4-3 in the decisive penalty shootout that followed.

In the second match, a below-strength Carlton showed tremendous form against an out-gunned Gippsland Falcons outfit, to win 3-0. After an early period of equal possession, Andrew Marth and Lubo Lapsansky started to assert their dominance.

It was a corner from Lapsansky in the 23rd minute that lead to the first goal. Dave McPherson flicked the ball on to an unmarked Alex Moreira at the far post, and he tidily did the rest.

From that moment on, Carlton pinned Gippsland down in their own defensive half for much of the remainder, due largely to a man-of-the-match performance by Blues midfielder Andrew Packer.

Joe Tricarico also troubled the Falcons with a few good crosses, only for Manny Gotis and Dean Fak to hastily clear the ball out of the danger area.

An on-song Moreira earned a second goal ten minutes after the half-time interval. Lapsansky was again the instigator, with his free kick finding the head of Andrew Marth, and from there it dropped into the path of the Brazilian. His efforts earned him applause and an early shower in the 58th minute.

His substitute, John Markovski, didn't take long to make an impact of his own. He set up a goal-bound Joe Tricarico header from his cross in the 67th minute, much to the disappointment of Bojo Jevdjovic in goals for Gippsland.

With the win theirs, Carlton took the foot off the pedal in the last 20 minutes. The score remained 3-0 at full-time, with no bookings having been recorded by referee Perry Mur throughout the entirety of the match.

Without the presence of the suspended Mehmed Durakovic in defence, the Falcons were always going to struggle against a Carlton squad brimming with confidence and star players.

Scorers: Moreira (23", 54"), Tricarico (67").

CARLTON:

Anastasiadis D (Cagalj 58"), McPherson, Douglas, Marth (Martin 72"), Atkinson, Moreira (Markovski 58"), Lapsansky, Thompson (Motsiopoulos 72"), Terminello, Tricarico, Packer

GIPPSLAND FALCONS:

Jevdjovic, Gotis, Fak, Marcina, Bell, Vargas A, Robertson (Savage 73"), Puca, MacNicol (Hutchinson 73"), Hastie, Sapazovski

The South Melbourne versus Melbourne Knights game was played under lights. The Ericsson Cup champions wanted at least one convincing hit-out before jetting off to the Oceania Club Championship.

In doing so, they will be leaving behind the Blue Ribbon Cup Final for the remaining two best-placed teams to fight it out. South Melbourne wanted to leave no stone unturned, and as a result the Knights were made to look second-rate as they sustained a 5-1 hammering.

Just the preparation the Lakesiders need before facing some testing condi-

tions ahead in Fiji.

With both sides at virtually full-strength, the game was highlighted by great passing on the well-drained surface. After an early shot wide of the mark from an impressive Ante Deak, the momentum shifted dramatically in the other direction. Jim Tsekinis capitalised on loose marking to put South up 1-0.

Steve Panopoulos then picked up where he left off from Round 1 of the Blue Ribbon Cup. He cut through the Knights' defence just two minutes later, to allow John Anastasiadis to round the 'keeper and slot the ball home. 2-0 the score after only 17 minutes of play.

Apart from the occasional run from Hrvoje Matkovic (see story in this issue) and Deak, South Melbourne dominated in the middle courtesy of David Clarkson.

The Knights went to the bench early, but to no avail. Jim Tsekinis, Paul Trimboli and Fausto De Amicis continued to pile on the pressure up until the half-time break.

In the second stanza of play South continued to press home their advantage.

Referee Jeremy Blainey issued only one yellow card in this mostly one-sided match.

Martin John was one of the Knights' best, and managed to pull off some energetic saves to try and limit the onslaught. There was little he could do about the next three goals for South Melbourne however.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT CURTIS

A deep cross in the 70th minute from substitute Anthony Magnacca fell to Michael Curcija, whose initial shot was blocked by the lunging goalkeeper.

Curcija followed up with a second strike, to make the score 3-0. The next goal was an absolute gem -- easily the goal of the tournament so far.

Steve Iosifidis put through Magnacca in the 87th minute, who then beat the goalkeeper with a textbook drive into the upper left corner of the net after a one-on-one confrontation.

More misery later befell the Knights,



New South signing Anthony Magnacca. He scored a cracker in the Champions 5-1 win over Knights.

when an assist from Curcija allowed Paul Trimboli to fire home in the last minute of the match.

The South Melbourne faithful were ecstatic.

The only consolation for the Melbourne Knights was when a plucky shot from Ante Deak rebounded off Steve Iosifidis in the 77th minute, and sailed over Milan Udvaracz's head and into the goal. But the newly-signed South custodian will have other things on his mind later this month when he packs his bags for the inaugural Oceania Club Championship.

And perhaps bigger and better things will await he and his team-mates if they qualify for the grand prize -- a million-dollar berth in the World Club Championship next year.

The man-of-the-match was South Melbourne skipper Paul Trimboli.

Scorers:

South Melbourne: Tsekinis (15"), Anastasiadis (17"), Curcija (73"), Magnacca (87"), Trimboli (90").
Melbourne Knights: Deak (77").

SOUTH MELBOURNE:

Udvaracz (Jones 53"), Iosifidis, De Amicis, Liparoti, Alagich, Clarkson (Mustafa 66"), Panopoulos (Psonis 79"), Lozanovski, Trimboli, Tsekinis (Magnacca 46"), Anastasiadis (Curcija 46")

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS:

John, Vargas R, Vukadin (Collins 46"), Vassallo (Plunkett 61"), Banini, Rahjer (Magdic 74"), Jolic, Trupkovic (Kovacevic 31"), Matkovic, Deak, Kelic



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SPIRIT OPEN DAY THIS SUNDAY

Glamour club Northern Spirit will hold its annual open day at North Sydney. Last year's inaugural event was a huge success, with over 4,000 fans turning up.

It starts at 11am at North Sydney Oval. All the Spirit stars will be there, there will be a free coaching clinic and a penalty shootout featuring Paul 'Hendo' Henderson.

There will also be two games; one featuring Spirit Colts v Spirit Youth, then the big one. A celebrity game featuring Spirit against a celebrity team at 2pm.

The celebrity game will feature Channel Seven presenter Tracey Holmes, rugby league legend Cliff Lyons, triathlete Niki Andronicus, Ironman Guy Leech and political leader and Spirit director Kerry 'SoccerChik' Chikarovski.

There will also be a sausage sizzle and you can pick up a club membership for the new season.

Robbie Slater is looking forward to the day: "Our fans were our greatest asset last year and we want that association to keep going," he said.



Spirit coach Arnie. He wants to see you this Sunday at North Sydney for the Open Day

THE GRADUATE WITH THE SCORING TOUCH

By Aidan Ormond

The Rob Smithies story is not your average tale of an Australian soccer player. Growing up on Sydney's North Shore he had dreams of playing football professionally, yet an academic career beckoned. Fortunately for him he was able to combine the two, winning a four-year scholarship at a US College while playing Collegiate League soccer and studying Economics.

Upon his return to Australia he continued his studies at Sydney University, in the process scoring 140 goals in four seasons with the University's NSW Division Two side.

Smithies has also played in the annual Australian University games over these last few seasons.

He even slotted one past Northern Spirit in a friendly two weeks ago. His form has been gradually noticed by watchers of NSW Federation Football — award-winning journalist Paul Goodwin even suggested recently that Spirit should have a look at him.

Smithies has had trials with Federation side Manly Warringah Dolphins in 1996 however it did not work out ("I just guessed they didn't want me").

Now, the just turned 27-year-old is working as a commercial lawyer after completing a degree at Sydney University, and is ready to throw it all in for a chance at NSW Super League (starting in Summer this year) or even NSL. As the urbane Smithies said, "I've got the rest of

my life to practice law."

And age should not matter in a country that struggles to produce genuine strikers. Parramatta Power's Steve Berry, who at 30 was considered too old for NSL, is a good example of player who, if given the chance, can show some of the younger players up. Last year he was one of the standout players at the minor premiers Sydney United, scoring goals from midfield and showing tremendous stamina in what was a hard working midfield quartet.

Smithies' US College was Marquette in Milwaukee, and it was a worthwhile experience for him. "It was great," he said. "They pick up the tab for your education and you practice soccer in the afternoon and you play all around the country in the collegiate league."

"A few of the players I played against were in the US World Cup squad. It was a fun and brilliant experience."

And the goal he recently scored against Northern Spirit was for a select team from Wakehurst in the Northern suburbs of Sydney. Only his brother was a familiar face.

"Playing against Spirit, with a bunch of guys you've never played with was a little difficult. My brother was playing at left half and he layed off a ball on the edge of the box and I hit it with the outside of the right boot. The keeper seem surprised and it went under him. It's good to score against the famous Hendo!"

The goal was all the more sweet because, as a resident of the North Shore, he is a regular Friday night fan at Spirit Park.

"As a player," he said of his style, "I

am probably a combination of the bullocking striker and the one who has some touch. I try to work in with the players around me and assess the defence and what it's trying to do. I like Romario but I have not moulded myself on him ... Ronaldo, Bebeto, Rivaldo and all those Brazilians are heroes of mine."

He is also in no doubt as to the way forward for clubs in the NSL. "Yeah, I go to Spirit and follow them. I think one thing great about Spirit is their community-based work. They played against a Wakehurst selection on a cold midweek night when I played them. There is not a lot in it for Spirit, but they got 700 fans for that game and those fans will end up going to see them play."

"It's because of this grass-roots approach that they are able to pull 15-17,000 crowds and I think they are transforming the game here. The future is not ethnic pockets of 4-5,000 fans, not that they aren't important, but it has to be multi-ethnic approach."

"Spirit has tapped into that community thing with the Mums and Dads and kids getting the players' autographs — ordinarily they would not have access to these players."

Smithies plans to approach clubs in higher divisions. "I am thinking about writing off to Super League and NSL clubs. Obviously with my name being mentioned in the Super Soccer magazine and now Inside Soccer it is something to build on ... I am just not sure how I go about it. But I would love to trial at a bigger club ... pro-



Rob Smithies ... the goalscoring machine from second division side Sydney University

fessional sport is what you dream of. I am a commercial lawyer so I am doing alright for myself but I would give it up to play soccer. I can always go back to law in the next forty years."

And perhaps a professional soccer player is slightly higher in social standing than a lawyer?

(Laughs) "Yeah, there aren't too many sportsman jokes, but plenty of ones about lawyers!"

Perhaps this goalscorer will get a chance to prove himself on a bigger stage — Australia needs every natural scorer it can muster.

"Rob Smithies played in the Division Two Grand Final on the weekend. Sadly for Rob and the Sydney University lads, things did not quite work out. To find out what happened, turn to page 14.

SOUTH AND THE BIG CITY

By Aidan Ormond

For South Melbourne, the back-to-back champions of Australia, its off-season signings have been decidedly low key. No name stars, just carefully picked players designed to further bolster the squad. Anthony Magnacca from Cosmos is one, and former Adelaide Sharks midfielder Ritchie Alagich is another. Alagich has found it a comfortable move for him.

"It's a very easy club to settle in to,

they really look after you. The way the club and the other players treat a new player makes it very easy," said the well spoken 25-year-old.

Alagich's family is a sporting one: his sister Dianne is a Matilda who played in the WWC '99 in the USA, brother Chris has a kayaking scholarship on the Gold Coast, two brothers play state league in South Australia, even his mother played soccer.

Having completed his first month of pre-season training at Lakeside, Alagich has noticed some differences in training:

"Yes it's hard but with a lot of games ahead of us however I think allowances have been made for that. Obviously we can't be run into the ground before the Fiji qualifiers. Off the field and on, the way training is conducted, you can't not put in or have an off day."

"We will have six to seven games before the Fiji qualifiers. I don't think you can really describe the excitement of the potential to play in the World Club Championships. The average Joe Bloggs in the street knows who Manchester United is, so when you say we could be playing them in Brazil, they sit up and take notice."

"It's a funny sport," he says of the upcoming qualifiers in Fiji, "anything can happen, particularly as it's not round-robin, there is a semi and a final. We've all seen what New Zealand teams can do."

But if there is one player who can turn on a bit of magic when needed in Fiji, it's South's Socceroo Paul Trimboli. "The quality of players around you at South, there is a very good player in every position. When you play and train with Paul Trimboli however you just realize



New Kid on the Block ... South's new midfielder Ritchie Alagich

what an exceptional player he is," said Alagich.

"At this early stage it's possible to win the treble, but everyone wants to rise to the occasion against you...players say 'we didn't win the league but we beat South Melbourne', so it won't be easy. The depth is there at South, with other clubs, after the first 13 or so the quality starts to die away."

While Alagich admits to thinking about an overseas career at some point, he is firmly committed to his present surroundings in the city of www.jeff.com. "You do think about overseas, but my challenge is to prove myself first with South Melbourne."

"It's about making the most of this challenge."

And at South Melbourne, this is the season for some huge challenges.

NEXT WEEK ANGE POSTECOGLOU

Inside Soccer will bring you a two-part interview with reigning Premiership coach Ange Postecoglou commencing next week.

In the interview, Inside Soccer's Alan Clark discusses with Postecoglou a range of matters covering Postecoglou's playing and coaching career in which he has won two Championships as a player, and now two as a coach.

Postecoglou also tells of the pressure to make it three in a row as a coach, explains the preparations he's making for South Melbourne's forthcoming trip to Fiji as Australia's representative in the World Club Champion tournament, how he feels missing out on the National coaching position, how he manages the talented South squad, and what he said to the

team to keep them focussed after the news broke about the tragic accident that meant key midfielder David Clarkson couldn't play in the major semi-final game against Sydney United.

He tells of his coaching errors as well as his triumphs, his experience under famous coaches like Rale Rasic, Tommy Docherty, Ferenc Puskas, and Frank Arok - and what he's learnt from them along the way.

Postecoglou and South Melbourne. One goes almost automatically with the other, but how would he feel if the connection has to cease? You'll be surprised.

Starting next week, the first part of a two-part interview with Ange Postecoglou, only in INSIDE SOCCER.

THE HENDO FACTOR



Hendo flying high last year against Sydney United in Spirit's dramatic loss to the minor premiers.

our young midfielder. He got a few games late last season and I think he should have an influential one too. But really, all our young guys are looking confident which is good to see.

So which keepers do you admire?
I would have to say the Petkovic brothers. They have both played for some time in the NSL, plus they have played for the Socceroos. Yeah, I do admire their skills.

Power? What is your opinion of this new club?

It will be good to have another club in Sydney that hopefully gets good crowds in. I saw Frank Farina on TV saying that the team won't be a surprise because it is basically the Sydney United side from last year - I agree.

So what are your plans for the future?

Yeah, it's my dream like everyone else to play overseas. I would love it, for sure.

Hendo, welcome to Inside Soccer. How are things shaping up at Spirit Park and are you in a better position than you were this time last year?

It's hard to say at this point. Clayton (Zane) is overseas with the Olyroos at the moment - he was scoring this time last year - and our new striker David Seal is injured. Yes we are winning the games at the moment, but with those two back we could be scoring a few more goals as well.

To play in the World Club Championship in 2001 you must first win the Grand Final. What and where do you have to improve to do that?

Well, we're pretty solid at the back, we do give away some silly goals, but generally we are quite strong. Definitely upfront and scoring is where we have to improve, because last year if we had taken our chances, particularly early in the game, it would have taken the pressure off the defence.

So what does Hendo do to give the forwards confidence? Do you tell them "mate you're the best it's gonna happen"?

Yeah, you sort of pat them on the back and tell them better luck next time and to keep their head up. Certainly there is pressure on them because if they don't score, and there is one mistake from us, we could be sacrificing valuable points.

The Spirit fans. How do you describe them?

Unbelievable! The response that we got from the northern suburbs was superb. Who would have thought that a club in Australia could average almost 15,000 per game? Just unbelievable.

And yourself too. Who would have thought just a couple of years ago that things would have turned out the way it did.

Yeah, exactly. Most players would love to play national league, and for me to play in the first game after coming in to the club as third choice keeper, well, it has been fantastic. I really should publicly thank Arnie and keeper coach Steve Watson for their support.

Your age is an in-between one. Your too old for the Olyroos and obviously your behind in the pack of our senior keepers, led by the likes of Bosnich et al. Your kind of caught in the middle.

(Laughs) I was born at a difficult stage I think.



WHEN THE MARKETING GURUS START ASSESSING NORTHERN SPIRIT'S PHENOMENAL SUCCESS, THE 'HENDO FACTOR' MUST NOW TAKE ITS PLACE AMONGST THE CHARTS AND FIGURES. A VIRTUAL UNKNOWN LAST YEAR, HE TOOK HIS CHANCE WITH BOTH HANDS AND PLAYED ALL SEASON, AND, IN THE PROCESS, THE CULT OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPED. THE FANS LOVED HIS KNOCKABOUT APPROACH, A REFRESHING CHANGE IN THE MODERN ERA. AS ONE FAN SAID TO ME: "HE'S JUST LIKE ONE OF US ON THE TERRACES."

PAUL HENDERSON, OR "HENDO" AS THE CHANT GOES AT NORTH SYDNEY, IS ONE OF OUR GAME'S MOST PRIZED POSSESSIONS. GIFTED AS A KEEPER, AND A NATURAL WITH THE PUBLIC. WHEN AIDAN ORMOND CAUGHT UP WITH HIM HE HAD JUST FINISHED ANOTHER OF THE MANY COMMUNITY PROMOTIONS THE CLUB IS RUNNING, FURTHER ENHANCING ITS REPUTATION AS ONE OF SYDNEY'S PREMIER SPORTING ORGANIZATIONS.

Any particular country?
(Laughs) Anywhere that's not cold!

Well that rules out England and Central Europe!
Look anywhere I can get a club really.

Just going back to Spirit, who are the younger ones coming through that we should look out for?

Simon Catanzaro, our new striker from the NSW Institute of Sport is looking good in front of goal. He should do well, and look out for Anthony Faria,

There won't be too many surprises with them.

So do you believe Power and Spirit will develop a great rivalry?
(Thinking) No ... I don't think so. I think last year we had a strong rivalry with Marconi off the pitch, and with Sydney United it was on the park.

So where did this Marconi rivalry come from?

Yeah, it kind of developed quickly. I think Marconi was thought of as some sort of glamour club. A lot of players



The Spirit in the Sky ... fans have just over a month before the Friday night fever returns to North Sydney.

with good reputations played there then we came on the scene and kind of took the limelight off them. This is probably how it started.

So with Arnie how do you describe him?

He is a great coach. He has ideas developed from Europe and I think under him we can go a long way.

Is he the sort of coach that gives the players a good bollocking, or does he have a soft side?

He lets us know and gets his opinion. Yeah he can be pretty loud some times.

How awkward is it when you keep out the other gloves week in week out?

No it's not awkward; it's really just a job. Off the park we talk and there's nothing between us.

Going back to last season what stands out for you?

There are two memories that stand out for me. First is the opening night in front of nearly 19,000 against UTS Olympic. The second was the last game of the season for us, against Marconi in the finals at their ground, where I had a bit of an 'accident' when the ball went over my head.

Looking back on that incident, what went wrong?

I just think I came out too early and it went over me, and I just knew then I was gone.

How did you feel?

I just wanted to bury myself.

But the supporters and players were still pretty supportive later that night.

Yeah, we went back to a hotel in North Sydney after the game and the fans were really great to me.

You always make yourself accessible to the fans. Should more players be doing this?

Yeah, after most home games I like to let them know I appreciate them. I mean the fans come to see you play, so you should extend your hand and say 'thanks'.

There is the sex symbol tag that some of the female Spirit fans have given you (two in particular who shall remain anonymous). What do you think, are you an NSL sex symbol?

(Laughs sheepishly). I don't know about that! As long as they keep coming to the games and supporting the team that's the main thing.

Thanks Hendo

Cheers guys, keep up the good work and we look forward to seeing all the fans at North Sydney for our first home game.

PARRA'S POWER PITCH TO THE MEDIA

By Aidan Ormond

New NSL club Parramatta Power held their inaugural Media Dinner last week. Staged in the corporate dining room in perfect view of the expanses of Parramatta Stadium, it gave the club a chance to put their case to the assembled media, and for the media to get to know the clubs administrators and to interview the players.

Representatives from radio, TV and print media were present, including *The Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The well-run night demonstrated the club's savvy approach to its soccer operation and further staked its claim as a serious player in our game. As Dennis

Fitzgerald, CEO of the Parramatta Leagues (Power's main benefactor) said, "we are about lifting the bar".

The evening was run during the busy week leading up to the club's Rugby League semi-final, giving a good indication of its organization and commitment to its soccer operation.

It was revealed on the night that the club had paid its affiliation fees upfront to Soccer Australia for the next five years. A fact that no doubt impressed Soccer Australia as much as the assembled hacks.

Richard Plesa was introduced by his coach David Mitchell as the Power's inaugural team Captain. He made a short speech as did Mitchell and his assistant coach Laurie McKinna.

The night's MC was Rugby League personality Ray Hadley, whose at times hilarious observations about the assembled guests had the audience in the palm of his hand. He also noted that his son is a junior soccer player and is looking forward to seeing Power play.

Fitzgerald later added that the difference between other non-soccer clubs venturing into the world game here (such as Collingwood and Carlton) was that the Leagues club had poker machines "which ensure a very healthy profit."

He also outlined the reasons for the venture, stating that many of the Leagues club's 28,000 members contributed to their profits but were not particularly interested in Rugby League. For example, its European and Asian members.

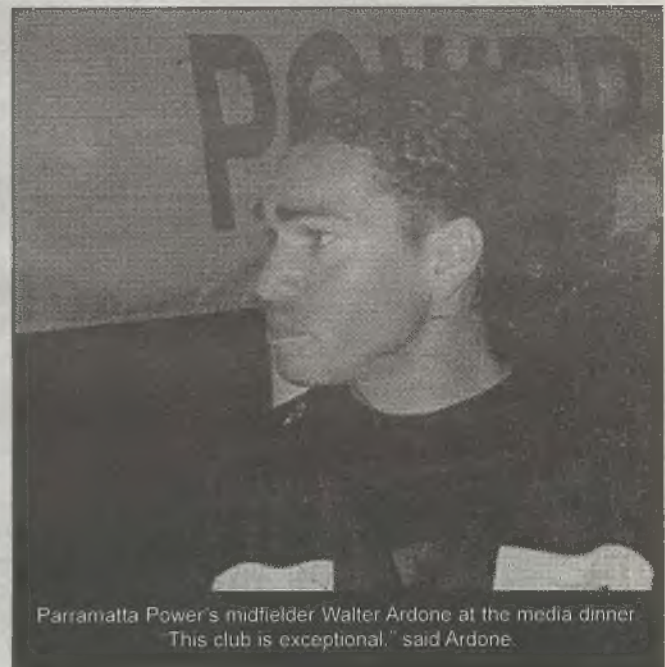
Added to that fact was the Leagues Club's commitment to "community-based" activities, such as sponsorship of many of Parramatta's teams, including the local Super League club Parramatta Eagles.

Furthermore, there was only one regular user of the stadium (Rugby League), the potential of soccer globally and in Australia (Glory and Spirit were cited) and of playing in a truly national competition, which would "enhance" the reputation of the City of Parramatta nationally, were also reasons for going into this venture.

And no doubt having large crowds at the adjoining stadium in summer as well as winter will further boost the Parramatta Leagues' coffers.

New Power General Manager Brad Levy, reading from a prepared statement, said this was "arguably the boldest and shrewdest venture in this city for many years," which was supported by a "thriving Leagues club."

He also outlined the board's diverse backgrounds of sporting and administrative expertise, led by Chairman Alan Overton



Parramatta Power's midfielder Walter Ardone at the media dinner. This club is exceptional," said Ardone.

THE PARRA POWER BOARD IS:

**Doris Drewery,
Doug May, Dennis
Fitzgerald, Greg
Mitchell, Gary
Punch and Steve
Edge.
Chairman is
Alan Overton.**

OAM.

In summary it was a very good evening. The club and playing staff appear happy together, and by holding a media dinner, they understand that communicating with the media in person will help their cause.

It may not have been a case of 'forget the fourth estate where's the fourth course', but holding such an event hasn't harmed their chances of positive media coverage.



THE APPRENTICE

Two weeks ago Matt Thompson, 17, was playing at Super League club Macarthur Rams. Fortunately for him, coach Brian Dene selected him to play against Power in the NSL club's first official hitout.

And in true 'Boys Own' style, he impressed enough to be asked down for a trial with Dave Mitchell's side.

Now, Thompson (left) is on a full-time traineeship, training with the first team squad and playing in the youth team. He's even left school!

"Well, school wasn't my main interest!" said Thompson. "Training was good, not too hard so far."

"I've only been here for a week so it has all still not quite sunk in that I am here. The players here have shown me a lot of respect, and that had made

things much easier for me.

"My strongest part of my game is my vision," said the young midfielder clearly starstruck but determined to succeed.

THE SENIOR PLAYER

New Power captain is Richard Plesa. "It's a great thrill to be captain. I was vice-captain last year at Sydney United, occasionally taking over when needed, and I have captained before in my early career days, so I have some experience in it ... It's a great honour."

So what kind of captain will he be? "It depends on the situation, I will be shouting at players when need to be shouted at on the park, after all I am a sweeper and I have to organize things, but the guys know me and I'll be supportive when needed."

Midfielder Walter Ardone said: "The nucleus of the side is strong, and with the addition of Blagojevic and Angelucci we are even stronger."

"We have been here doing promotions here at halftime during the Rugby League."

"To be honest it's a little embarrassing but we want to do as much as possible to help our club."

"I've signed for two years, my injury is over (he cancelled an off-season playing trip to Norway to get fit) and mate, this club is exceptional."

THE BOARD MEMBER

Doris Drewery is one of the board at Parra Power. "Our vision is to be the biggest and best in the league. We did not doubt our admission because our submission was strong and we knew that we could put a competitive team on the park."

"The enthusiasm of the general public, and fans of soccer, has been fantastic. If we can get 15,000 here will be happy for our first game, obviously we would like more, but that would be a good figure."

"We are negotiating with our major sponsor at the moment, but we have been pleasantly surprised at the level of support from potential sponsors."

And her message to the fans out there is simple: "For the fans out there in the West of Sydney, this is your team so support it any way you can."

Doris Drewery is one of the key people behind the success of Super League club Parramatta Eagles.

THE BIRTHDAY BOY'S WISH

By Aidan Ormond

He promised his wife Zlata last season was his swansong, but Velimir Kupresak wants, as his birthday wish, one more campaign with his beloved Sydney United before he retires from the game.

"She is upset with me because we thought last year was my last one but I go one more time so she said okay," said a happy Kupresak last week.

He turned 36 on Wednesday, and age has not wearied him - he continues to work his day job as a painter and decorator, trains nights and devotes what little spare time is left to his young family ("my greatest supporters").

And Kupresak has plenty of feeling for his NSL club of ten years. While many over the last few years have left, tired of the unstable approach to the running of Sydney United, Kupresak has remained loyal.

Yet the Croatian born central defender (although he grew up on Osijek his birthplace was Laslovo) does not

bear any grudges towards his former teammates, particularly those who moved en-masse in the off-season to the professional surroundings of David Mitchell's Parramatta Power. "No, I don't miss them yet. It was very difficult because they want to look after themselves. I don't blame them for going. Maybe Mitchell made a mistake taking them all. He should have left some, but they were free agents."

Kupresak and his new teammates have just returned from a tour of China. "It was very good, because it was great to get to know each other. It's very difficult because we don't know their names."

"They were very good teams we played against, from Uruguay, Japan and China. The Uruguayans were the best although it is very humid so you have to be fit to play in China."

Kupresak is also impressed with some of the new faces at Edensor Park.

"When I came to Australia Tommy (Pondeljak) was a young boy. Now he is a very very good player. Pre-season is very hard. Dave Ratcliffe is respected and I think he can do a good job."

"I think if we end up middle table we will be alright," he said, perhaps realistically, of his team's chances in 1999/2000.

Kupresak arrived at Edensor Park ten years ago, after being voted the 1989 Best and Fairest Player at St Albans in Victoria. He also played for Borovo and Metalac Olt in Croatia prior to coming to Australia.

You've got to hand it to our increasingly diminishing numbers of part-time players, like Kupresak, who combine full-time work with night training sessions. "It's very hard because I come home, eat, then sleep."

Former Sydney United player Steve Berry, currently at Power, is in the same boat, combining an on-call job as a supervisor of road construction with his commitments at



Velimir Kupresak one more time with feeling

Power (he is their only player in this situation, the rest are full-time). Both players note the support of immediate family as being essential in surviving this type of schedule.

When asked why Sydney United's crowds are not the same as others, and Kupresak is brutally frank. "I'll be honest with you, the club is Croatian and when the club changed its name and logo to Sydney United many said this is not Sydney Croatia anymore. It was not a good idea to change the name. The Croatian community is a small, that is why we don't get the crowds like Spirit and Glory."

And with an eye on the future, he is also a realist. "I think if Parramatta Power can get 10,000 to 15,000 fans to their games it will be very interesting because after that there may be something wrong for Sydney United."



YOUTH PLAYER TO LOOK OUT FOR: MELBOURNE KNIGHTS' YOUNGSTER HRVOJE MATKOVIC

By Mark Fisher

Just in case you didn't know it, football, popularly known as 'soccer' here, enjoys the highest junior participation rate of any sport in Australia, in keeping with a worldwide trend.

Many young players are dreaming of achieving the same heights as those of their heroes - the likes of Socceroos Harry Kewell, Mark Bosnich and Matilda Julie Murray.

One former Melbourne Knights youth player now has the opportunity to fulfil his junior playing days' ambitions, by securing himself a regular spot at senior level in the national league.

Word has it that he will be filling the position made available by Tom Pondeljak's move north to Sydney United. Meet Hrvoje Matkovic, another Victorian football talent in the making.

Q. Hrvoje, for how long have you been playing football?

It's been over 8 years. I was a junior at Dynamo Zagreb, then played with Hertha Berlin when my family moved to Germany. I have been playing in Australia since 1993.

Q. What position do you play, and where do you feel most comfortable on

the park?

Attacking midfield, up front with the two strikers. I am more or less a specialist with free kicks.

Q. Harking back to your first experiences as a junior player adapting to the Australian sporting environment, why did you continue playing football instead of taking up, say, Rules or other sports?

I just have a love for the game, and another main reason is that my father is a coach. He has had a big influence on my game. I didn't really like Aussie Rules; it never appealed to me.

Q. Which club were you at before you joined the Melbourne Knights, and how did your move to Somers Street actually come about?

When we came to Australia I played with St Albans Saints. Anyway, my dad took up a job as coach of the U16's at Melbourne Knights, and later I was picked to play with their youth team and so managed to move to Somers Street.

Q. What was the feeling like of actually getting selected for a senior national league team during the season?

Maybe it didn't hit me that hard as it did the others, because I had already

spent a season at Melbourne Knights Colts, who play in the national youth league. But it was a just a big achievement for me, you know, at 16 years of age. And to later play as a starting member of the squad against South Melbourne, it was just unbelievable.

Q. Describe your experience of your very first senior NSL game.

It just happened out of nowhere, because we played South Korea U23 when they toured and there were a few scouts plus the coach was there as well. Our squad was made up of both senior and youth players that day. It was Joe Biskic's first game as coach, and he came up to me after the game and said "the President said to stay in the dressing rooms".

I didn't know what to expect - I thought I had done something wrong, you know. I thought he would ask me to "please explain". He came up to me and said, "Are you coming with us on Saturday - we'll be playing in Wollongong" (against the Wolves), and I remembered that I hadn't trained with the seniors in the lead up to that game!

Well, the seniors had one training session before we went to Wollongong. The kickoff was delayed. I wasn't really

nervous, and before I came on (with about 20 minutes to go) I just had a smile on my face. I had a few touches of the ball, and we nearly managed to score the winner. It was a great experience.

On the bus we were talking about the game, and we were pretty happy to come away with a nil-all draw

***Continued next week when young Matkovic, who is still in school, talks about Mark Viduka, the coming season at Knights and his overseas dreams.**

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BETTER FIXTURE PLANNING WILL ENSURE NSL FANS SEE MORE GAMES

Want to plan your holidays around your club's fixtures in this season's EC? Want to take advantage of the need to book airfares and rooms well in advance to avoid copping the business rates?

So do most people, but they get no assistance from Soccer Oz.

In the week when the AFL has released its season 2000 draw for a season which starts on 8 March next year, Soccer Oz is still to make public its 1999/2000 draw for a season that starts in under four weeks.

But if you have a friend in the know, maybe you could have got access to the advise EC General Manager Stefan Kamasz provided the clubs on 27 August — six weeks before the season's start — in a fax detailing what was called "Final Ericsson Cup Fixture Schedule". It's still a secret from the fans, but at least the clubs know.

Granted, arranging a fixture list involving seventeen teams from locations as far apart as Perth, Morwell, Brisbane, and Auckland is not an easy task, and I don't envy Stefan his job. In the main, the purpose of a fixture list is to ensure that each team plays the other home and away, that there's a good mix of home games and games on the road, and that you try not to schedule neighbouring sides' games together.

pilation.

One of the great advantages of our national game moving to a summer season is that we play when the weather is (mostly) pretty good, and when there's less competition from other sports. In fact, for a while during our season, there's no other real mass-supported sport on.

Last season, the number of rounds meant that a midweek fixture on Australia Day was arranged. This was a great idea, and one which should be continued wherever possible. It's one that the fixture-arrangers should be trying to make as a feature in our game, and one around which serious marketing could be brought to bear.

Just think: the NSL is the only

INSIDE SOCCER'S ALAN CLARK TAKES A LOOK AT NSL FIXTURES AND HOW WE CAN USE THEM TO OUR BEST ADVANTAGE

national competition playing then. It's around the time when the country starts to think about returning to normal after the traditional Christmas and New Year shut-downs and turn-offs.

It's an opportunity for the sizeable

been easier to arrange than a bye for the Kiwi-club, ensuring that all Oz-teams were in action on Oz-Day? What's even sadder about this is that Auckland is due to play in Perth on that day, but Perth want the fixture reversed because of other activities which go on in Perth on Oz-Day which means attracting a crowd may be difficult. So the Kiwi club is not just likely to play instead of an Oz-club on Oz-Day — there's every chance it'll host a game.

Is 26 January a day of significance in New Zealand? Nope!

Anzac Day will have a round this season, and that's a day of significance for both countries. That's a better day for dropping an Oz-club into the bye box, to ensure there's a game on in New Zealand, or at least one involving the Kiwis. Maybe it's only the Rugby League and football which gives the opportunity for Anzac Day to be commemorated by league competition between Kiwi teams and Oz ones, and we should make sure this international aspect of our game is used to our game's advantage, not let dribble away.

Because EC games are now played on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and sometimes even Mondays for a single "weekend" round, there are very few rounds on which all the fixtures are played on the same day. This year there are just four such rounds: Tuesday 28 December, Wednesday 26 January, Tuesday 25 April, and the last round on Sunday 7 May which is needed to maintain the integrity of the competition.

In only these few rounds will fans around the country (and often in New Zealand too) feel part of such a huge event with eight games being played concurrently, and with progress scores being reported. They'll be at eight games at the same time. No other national sport can manage that.

So every attempt should be made these days special for marketing and promotional opportunities, to maximise the fans' feelings of belonging to a huge community stretching across the land, and now across the Tasman.

Returning to the theme of making the Oz-Day round a special one, how easy would it be to market interest in our game basing that round's fixtures around these

match-ups:

South Melbourne v Carlton Marconi v Sydney United Northern Spirit v Parramatta Power or Sydney Olympic Adelaide Force v Adelaide Sharks Wollongong Wolves v Newcastle Breakers or Canberra Cosmos Brisbane Strikers v Perth Glory Gippsland Falcons v Melbourne Knights Auckland bye

The Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide derbies speak for themselves. Regardless of where the teams end up in the league, you'd be sure the form-guide would be irrelevant. Players and fans wouldn't need to make the long trek, or miss out on seeing their team play. That round's attendance figures would be enormous.

It's such an obvious arrangement, it surprises me why it hasn't been adopted. Brisbane and Perth are at opposite ends of our great nation. What could be a better illustration of the spread of our game, and the vastness of our country that we feature a fixture between these two on Oz-Day? Let them play for the Oz-Day Bi-Coastal Cup.

If Brisbane hosts it one Oz-Day, have Perth host it the next (subject to the suitability of holding it in Perth then).

Depending upon whether the Oz-Day round falls early or late in the week, schedule the travelling team — in this case Perth — to have its previous round's game or its following round's game either the bye, or in Sydney. For Brisbane, make it Adelaide.

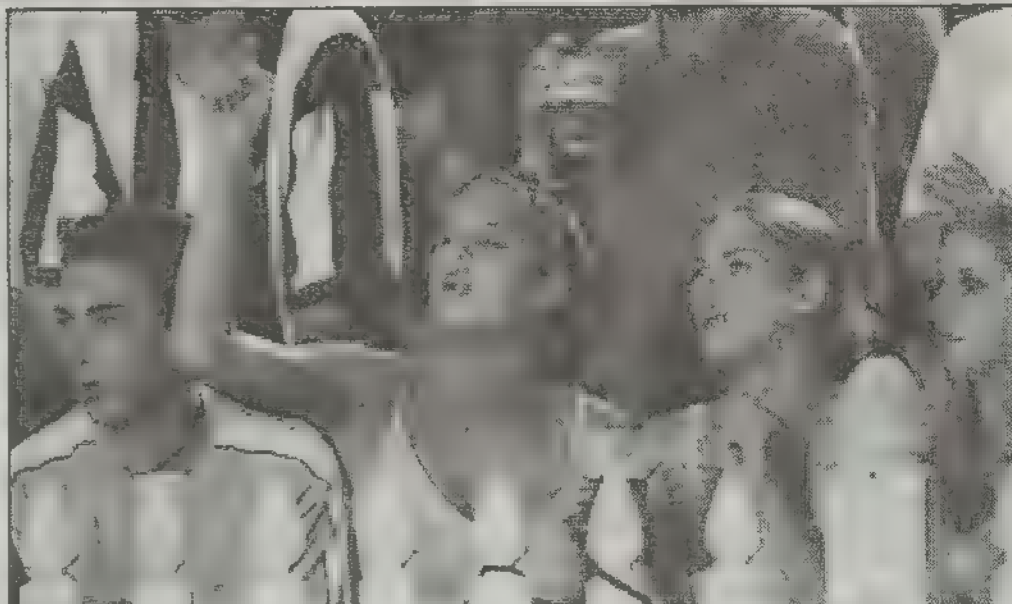
Give the Oz-Day bye to the Kiwi team. Create the Steel-Town Cup for the Wollongong v Newcastle fixture, or another one if the match-up is better with Wollongong v Canberra.

Make the Oz-Day round something that becomes a traditional part of our game, in the same way that the Anzac Day round is for Collingwood and Essendon and the AFL. Similar pairings occur on days of significance in football around the world.

And it's especially important in our sport which those favouring others like to marginalise as, "not Australian". Show them how hopelessly out of touch they are by the way we embrace Australia Day and make it integral to our sport like no other can.

Create the fixtures using these opportunities, rather than just letting them fall as the random number-generator places them.

To do otherwise is like missing from inside the six-yard box.



But there's also another vital purpose of a fixture list for a professional sport relying as it inevitably does on the paying fan, and in generating interest from the media. And that's the marketing angle — putting on your best games, or at least those you reckon will be the marquee ones — at the most suitable time in the season.

For example, you might positively decide to start your fixtures with a Grand Final rematch as a marketing and media ploy. Equally, you might schedule what you reckon will be a big spectator attendance game at a time when the fans will be bursting to come, rather than let it fall away at a time when it might be overlooked because of other competition for the sporting or entertainment dollar.

You might ensure the reigning Premier plays its first round game at home to allow the ceremonial flag-raising, or a similar recognition of achievement. There are many variables, all of which should be weighed up and factored into fixture com-

football-going community to participate in an Oz-Day activity, but one that's ours, and showcasing the broader and present-day Oz-community, not just the mob who see the Endeavour landing as the defining image of Australia.

It's an opportunity for the huge number of first, second, third, and beyond-generation of Australians, as well as our indigenous cousins to show that we are an integral part of the fabric of our nation, that we are here, that we are Australians, and that we can celebrate our Australian-ness by loudly supporting the teams we love, playing the sport we love to watch.

But that means the games to be scheduled for this round should be carefully chosen, not just fall out in a random manner.

Would you believe that in the fixtures provided clubs there's been no effort to make something special of this round? What a waste!

And worse — on Oz-Day, an Oz-club is having the bye, when what could have

INSIDE JUNIOR SOCCER

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BILL TURNER CUP



BILL TURNER CUP CLIMAX

The climax to the 1999 Bill Turner Cup starts tonight in Newcastle when the semifinals are held at the Edgeworth Soccer Ground. Before the semi finals a Civic Reception will be held for the four teams at the Lake Macquarie City Council with Mayor John Kilpatrick welcoming the teams to the home of the Bill Turner Cup where the semifinals, and final, are held each year.

The culmination of the Bill Turner Cup brings together a cosmopolitan group of four teams stretching from the Far North Queensland town of Cairns, represented by St Augustines, down to the south coast of NSW, represented by Figtree High. In between those two distant places Sydney is represented by Pennant Hills High and, appropriately, St Peters, Maitland hails from the area where the Bill Turner Cup was born, Northern NSW.

It promises to be an

enthralling two nights, with the semifinals held on Tuesday and the final a day later. Inside Soccer wishes all the participants the best of luck and may the eventual winner be a worthy representative of our football code.

After waiting all year, the four semi finalists in the 1999 Bill Turner Cup can start getting nervous whilst the other schools plan for next year.

Wet weather, depleted finances, and more wet weather and a host of other difficulties were not enough to stop the competition from reaching this exciting conclusion.

This is the first time in several years that none of the current semi finalists played in the previous year's semi finals.

This year sees St Augustines of Cairns try to achieve what no other Queensland school has been able to... win the Cup.

Expertly coached by Dutchman Tom Booy, who is a man of considerable experience,

as was shown at Perry Park, Brisbane when they won the Queensland section of the Cup.

He has built the squad from the goalkeeper forward. And what a goalkeeper! Luke Brown was the 'Player of the Match' in both the semifinal and final, when the side defeated Palm Beach, Currumbin and Brisbane Grammar.

Captain Paul Armit is a real leader on the field and the players respond very well to him. The team is well balanced and it is hard to detect any weakness.

They arrived in Newcastle early last week to overcome the travel lag of the 6,300 km bus trip from Cairns. This very act shows the commitment and enthusiasm of the players, and for that matter, the whole school.

Without sponsorship money the school has had to find the dollars locally, similar to another Cairns school, Kirwan State High, of a few years ago.

That two Cairns schools have won the Queensland final in

recent years shows the strength of Far North Queensland football.

St Augustines line up at six o'clock tonight for the first semi final against ASC St Peters, Maitland who only last Wednesday won their deferred quarter final match against Endeavour Sports High in a thriller at Robbins Oval, Maitland.

ASC St Peters is a solid combination. They have scored 33 goals during the lead up to the semi finals. Of the seven matches played they had a clean sheet four times and only the great Endeavour Sports High was able to score twice against them.

This year Phil Peate took over the reins as coach when regular tutor Jim Mate was overseas. Phil has done a great job moulding the side into a final unit.

Joshua Costello and Thomas Libbesson are dynamic players. One never knows where Jimmy Castillo will pop up next and no goalkeeper can relax.

This 6 o'clock fixture will be worth seeing Maitland supporters are certain to be out in force to encourage their boys. It is understood that some parents will be flying down from Cairns as well.

At 7.30 tonight, in what school soccer experts suggest will be a thriller. Pennant Hills High, out Caringbah way, take on the NSW South Coast side Figtree High.

Pennant Hills are the talk of Sydney following their 'penalty shootout' victory over the 1998 Bill Turner Cup winners Westfields Sports High in a really dynamic quarter final. Few people at the match would begrudge coach Peter Kneale and the boys their semifinal spot. Their only easy game this season was a 'bye' in round one.

Perhaps the only credit listing they had was playing every match against schools (in what country schools would suggest) were nearby suburbs of Sydney.

However, this does not alter

the fact that all were tough opponents. Much is expected of Ashley Ryan, Luke Smithers and David Ball.

Figtree are making their first semifinal visit since 1988 when today's coach David Denmead took the school into the final only to lose by the odd Richard Johnson (now playing for Watford in the English Premier League) goal. Prior to that final only Corrmal (1981) and Keira Boys High (1983) have made it through to the decider, although a couple have been semifinalists.

It is clear also that Figtree have had no easy games winning four by the odd goal and one by the highly charged penalty shoot out system.

Their 1-0 victory over Notre Dame College from Shepparton, Victoria was not a pretty game but it was tough.

They were down 0-2 against Daramalan College over in Canberra but came back dramatically to score three without reply. This side possesses real characters.

From the principal Mr Bouvet to year 7, the whole school is behind the squad. It would not surprise that should they reach the final a couple of coach loads of supporters will head north to the Edgeworth grounds (shades of the old Tasman Cup days).

Adam Pazitnay, Brad Grimson and Daniel Ratajkovski have shown excellent skills this

Tonight's spectators should be in for a treat with two potentially great games of football. The play-off and final tomorrow night are expected to be equally appealing.

The 1999 "Austercraft Medals Star Player Award" is wide open. These next four games will determine the winner. Strict rules apply in this award with at least one, maybe two forms already being declared invalid.

OTHER TOUR DATES
FA Cup Round 1
Premier League
Nationwide League
28 Oct to
3 Nov 1999

Manchester United
Premier League
Feb 2000

Premier League
Champions League
Nationwide League
6 March to
12 March 2000

Premier League
Nationwide League
FA Cup Matches
30 March to
5 April 2000

Premier League
Nationwide League
28 April to
28 April 2000

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BILL TURNER CUP



THE JOURNEY TO THE FINALS

There were many dramatic moments for many teams on their journey to the semifinals of the 1999 Bill Turner Cup.

Some schools made it to the end whilst many others fell by the wayside.

One team that did make it was St Peters, Maitland who played a dramatic quarter final last Wednesday.

The last quarter-final match in the 1999 Bill Turner Cup was breathtaking in every sense of the word. Over 850 spectators crammed into the Robbins Oval, Maitland to witness a five-goal thriller.

Both sides, St Peters Maitland and Endeavour Sports High from Sydney, exhibited a contest that brought together sighs, groans and roars and dreams almost every minute.

It was Maitland who opened up their defense in the fourteenth minute for Ryan Johansson to tuck away the opening score for Endeavour.

Brenton Cahill leveled the score early in the second half opening the way for a great finish. There was quite a bit of heat from the two sides as they strived for the winning goal.

Referee Bob Hamilton had to keep a tight control on the game. From one free kick well outside the penalty area Joshua Costello scored from a screamer for St Peters and it certainly appeared that the game was all over.

However, a bad lapse from the Maitland defenders saw Joel Vasquez tuck away the easiest of goals to send the match into golden goal time.

This period was tough and exhausting and one would suggest that applies to volatile spectators as well.

With the last throw of the dice in the eighteenth minute a St Peters striker was upended in the penalty box and a spot kick had to be given. Costello made no mistake for a 3-2 Maitland victory.

What a game! Endeavour have at least two players and St Peters also have two players that are destined for the National League in the not too distant future.

Watch Endeavour in the year 2000.

ASC St Peters, Maitland 3
(Joshua Costello 2 Brenton Cahill) defeated

Endeavour Sports High 2
(Ryan Johansson, Joel Vasquez)
Referee: Bob Hamilton

One school that didn't quite make it, is Daramalan College from Canberra. They won the ACT & NSW Surround area final by beating St Francis Xavier High 3-2 and then beat Orange High 5-1 in the pre-quarter final game. Their quarter final opponents were Figtree High.

On a very pleasant Spring day in the Nation's Capital, Daramalan College had gathered a large group of supporters at Majura Oval, banging drums and chanting for their school; Figtree High, from Wollongong, had also fanned up a large group who also gave their team great support.

Both teams were introduced to a number of Soccer Canberra dignitaries including Ian Heywood (Coach of Canberra Rockets), Tony Radford (Coach, ACT U'15 Representative team), Alan Lee (Operations Manager of Olympic Football, SOCOG, Canberra), Ros McQueen (SOCOG, Canberra and Acting Chair of the Senior League Management Committee, Soccer Canberra), Damien Beck (Chairman of Senior League Management Committee, Soccer Canberra), and Tony Buesnel (Coaching and Development Manager, Soccer Canberra).

In their previous game, a pre-quarter final clash against Orange High, Daramalan started off like a whirlwind and after twenty minutes were 3-0 in the lead. In the third minute Alvaro Guzman beat three Orange defenders, shooting past Trent Colley to put Daramalan up 1-0; three minutes later Daniel Caputo hit Daramalan's second from outside the penalty area, and in the twentieth minute Philip Smith side-footed home a cross from captain Danny Agnello.

Daramalan went on to win 5-1 and carried on from its Orange High match when it made a sensational start in the Figtree game by taking the lead after 15 seconds; Alvaro Guzman put Danny Agnello through down the right wing and Agnello crossed for Danny Caputo to volley past Marshall Lammers in the Figtree goal.

It seemed as if Daramalan would carry on from the game against Orange High as they had further chances to increase their lead in the next ten minutes. However, Figtree began to get back into the game and had a few chances to equalise. In the 24th minute Guzman had a good shot well saved by

Lammers.

Daramalan's coach, Brian Templeton, must have given a good half-time talk as his team went further into the lead three minutes into the second half. Referee, Clive Mackillop awarded a free kick to the Canberra team just outside the area and Guzman made no mistake giving Lammers no chance to make the score 2-0 to Daramalan. Maybe the Canberra boys were beginning to think of the trip to the semis in Newcastle, but Figtree had other ideas. One minute later they had reduced the deficit when Daniel Ratajkovski pounce on a loose ball in the Daramalan area and steered it wide of the keeper, Riley McNamara.

The Wollongong team, buoyed by encouragement from their considerable group of travelling supporters, then forced their way back into the game and a speculative shot from Daniel McDonald lobbed over McNamara for the equaliser. Figtree, by now, were well on top and it did not surprise the crowd when Brad Grimson's shot gave his team the lead for the first time. Daramalan's dream of the semi-finals had been destroyed by the team spirit of the South Coast team, and Figtree held on for a well deserved victory.

The Figtree boys go on to play Sydney school Pennant Hills High in the semifinals of the 1999 Bill Turner Cup.

Daramalan: Riley McNamara, Nicholas Mihailakis, Daniel Brunato, Danny Agnello, Steven Rezo, Daniel Caputo, Adam Dexter, Daniel Halangahu, Lachlan Carr, Matthew Soczynski, Timothy Singh, Christian Bustamante, Alvaro Guzman, Robert Pavkovic, Phillip Smith, Anthony Jagarivac.

Coach: Brian Templeton.

Figtree: Marshall Lammers, Tony Dimitrovski, Micheal Dimoski, Mitchell Stone, Steve Kajmakoski, Adam Pazitnaj, Micheal Crooks, Bradd Grimson, Daniel McDonald, Daniel Ratajkovski, Mitchell Harvey, Luke Russell, David Flint, Kurt

Older, Bill Vasilevski.

Coach: David Denmead.

Referee: Clive Mackillop

Best on the ground:

Daramalan: Alvaro Guzman, Danny Agnello, Danny Caputo.
Figtree: Bradd Grimson, Daniel McDonald, Daniel Ratajkovski

Bill Turner Cup 1999

Semi Finalist Results:

St Augustines, Cairns:	Smithfield 6-0
	Mareeba SHS 3-0
	Good Counsel 8-1
	Kirwan SHS 2-0
	Emmaus CC 3-1
	Palm Beach 2-1(GG)
	Brisb Gram 3-0

Goals: Scored 27 Conceded 3

ASC St Peters, Maitland	Maitland High 7-0
	Dungog High 9-0
	Cessnock 5-0
	Chatham 2-1
	Newcastle 4-1
	Gunnedah 3-0
	Endeavour 3-2

Goals: Scored 33 Conceded 4

Pennant Hills High:	Masada Coll 1-0
	Hunters Hill 1-0
	Narrabeen 3-0
	Oakhill Coll 1-0(GG)
	Patrician Br 2-1(GG)
	Westfields 2(4)-2(2)

Goals: Scored 10 Conceded 3

Figtree High:	Edmund Rice 2-1
	Dapto High 3-0
	St Josephs 4-3
	Holy Spirit 0(4)-0(1)
	Nowra High 3-1
	Notre Dame 1-0
	Daramalan 3-2

Goals: Scored 16 Conceded 7

SIX NIL: WANDERERS WALLOP SYDNEY UNI

Hajduk Wanderers celebrated back-to-back Grand Final victories when they outclassed a gallant Sydney University 6-0 in the 1999 Second Division season finale at St George Stadium.

The league's runners-up, Hajduk, who did not concede a goal during the finals series and peaked at the very end of the season, made heavy weather of some clear-cut first half chances before eventually taking the lead in the 27th minute.

Stylish midfielder and captain J J Elkui was allowed to ghost in at the far post to power home a header from Jack Costello's corner on the right, after a desperate clearance moments earlier by the over-worked Sydney University defence.

Trent Worrall and Sean Crampton each missed two golden

opportunities before the headed goal broke the deadlock but the Hajduk defence was untroubled for most of the game and the same Wanderers midfield was well on top as well.

Goals early in the second half, by Costello and Trent Holmes put an end to the students' hopes, with further goals from Damien Brown and Crampton and a 6th goal late from Elkui turning it into a bit of a rout at the finish.

Uni keeper Matt Crow was a very busy man and his constant exposure led to him conceding the penalty put away by Crampton that brought up the 5th goal for the victors.

Hajduk also won the Under 21s 2-1 over Hills United, with Mount Druitt claiming the Under 18 prize with a win on penalties, also over Hills United.

IT'S GRAND FINAL TIME IN ADELAIDE

What a weekend in the South Australian Mutual Community Top Five Series. In the Premier League Preliminary Final, Port Lion Pirates enter their first Grand Final for about 20 years due to a fabulous overall performance in their preliminary final against Raiders at Hindmarsh.

Dino Sordillo sent the Pirates 1-0 up after 15 minutes, only to see Mark Brazzale equalise for the Raiders a few minutes later.

The Pirates regained the lead before half-time when a Fraser Keegan free-kick was deflected past the Raiders keeper. The score remained 2-1 for the Pirates until late in the second half when super-sub Peter Sfyrios scored the clincher to ensure the Pirates' date with destiny this Friday night at 8pm against the Cumberland Foxes.

In the early game, the North East Metro Stars defeated Enfield City 3-0 to set up a Grand Final showdown with Adelaide City. It is shaping up as a cracking no-holds-barred derby.

Metros ran away with the game in the second stanza after Enfield had dominated the

first half but failed to put away their chances. Romeo Tatarelli, Ryan Moore and Enzo Perre were the scorers for Metro, who have created a fairytale come true by gaining promotion to the Premier League in their first season as a Federation Club.

Will the fairytale continue? Only Adelaide City stand in their way.

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NSW STATE LEAGUE RESULTS

DIVISION TWO:
GRAND FINAL:
FIRST GRADE:
Hajduk Wanderers 6 bt
Sydney University 0.
UNDER 21:
Hajduk Wanderers 2 bt
Hills United 1.
UNDER 18: Mt Druitt 1
drew Hajduk Wanderers 1
(4-2 Penalties).

DIVISION THREE:
PRELIMINARY FINAL:
FIRST GRADE:
Western Sydney Lions 1
drew White City 1 (White
City 2 bt Western Sydney
Lions 1 Extra Time).
SECOND GRADE:
The Wanderers 0 drew
Hakoah 0 (4-3 Penalties).

DIVISION FOUR:
MAJOR SEMI FINAL:
FIRST GRADE:
Prairiewood United 2 bt
Balmain 0.
SECOND GRADE:
Holy Cross Ryde 3 bt
Nepean District 1.
MINOR SEMI FINAL:
FIRST GRADE:
Holy Cross Ryde 3 bt
Granville Greenisland 1.
SECOND GRADE:
Prairiewood United 2 bt
Balmain 1.

DIVISION FIVE:
MAJOR SEMI FINALS:
FIRST GRADE:
Kellyville Kolts 1 drew
Sporting SCC 1 (Kellyville
Kolts 2 bt Sporting SCC 1
Extra Time).
SECOND GRADE:
Kellyville Kolts 9 bt Sporting
SCC 6.
MINOR SEMI FINAL:
FIRST GRADE:

Kosciusko 1 bt UTS 0.
SECOND GRADE:
Sydney Tusc 2 bt Liverpool
Olympic 1.

WOMENS SUPER LEAGUE:
GRAND FINAL:
FIRST GRADE:
Marconi Fairfield 3 bt
Sutherland Sharks 1.
UNDER 21: Marconi
Fairfield 1 bt Sutherland
Sharks 0.

WOMENS STATE LEAGUE:
GRAND FINAL:
FIRST GRADE:
Manly Warringah 2 bt
Wollongong Wolves 0.
UNDER 19:
Manly Warringah 2 drew
Wollongong Wolves 2
(Manly Warringah 3 bt
Wollongong Wolves 2
Penalties).

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE -
FINAL SERIES:
MAJOR SEMI FINAL:
G/13: Blacktown City 3
bt Wollongong Wolves 1.
G/14: Gladesville Hornsby
2 bt Sydney Olympic 1.
G/15: Blacktown City 1
drew Marconi Fairfield 1 (3-
1 pen).
G/16: Sydney
Olympic 3 bt Newcastle
Breakers 0.
MINOR SEMI FINAL:
G/13: Newcastle
Breakers 1 bt Sydney
Olympic 0.
G/14: Sydney United 4 bt
Blacktown City 1.
G/15: Gladesville Hornsby
1 drew Southern Districts 1
(3-5 pen).
G/16: Blacktown City 2 bt
Leichhardt Tigers 1.

DIVISION ONE YOUTH
LEAGUE - FINAL SERIES:
PRELIMINARY FINAL:
G/13: Illawarra Lions 2 bt
Blacktown Assoc 0.
G/14: Penrith Panthers 2 bt
Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1.
G/15: Bonnyrigg White
Eagles 2 bt Hills United 0.
G/16: Blacktown Assoc 3 bt
Stanmore Hawks 0.

DIVISION TWO YOUTH
LEAGUE - FINAL SERIES:
GRAND FINAL:
G/13: Ku-Ring-Gai
Assoc 1 bt Nepean
Association 0 (extra time).
G/14: Mt Pritchard 3 bt
Macquarie Sports 0.
G/15: Parramatta City 3 bt
Hajduk Wanderers 1.
G/16: Nepean Association 2
bt Camden Tigers 1 (extra
time).

CADET LEAGUE DIVI-
SION ONE:
MAJOR SEMIFINAL:
UNDER 11: Canterbury
M'Ville 0 drew
Sydney United 0 (4-5
Penalties).
UNDER 12: Parramatta
Eagles 2 bt Sydney
United 1 (Extra Time).
MINOR SEMI FINAL:
UNDER 11: Marconi
Fairfield 4 bt St George 0.
UNDER 12: Marconi
Fairfield 1 bt St George 0.

CADET LEAGUE DIVI-
SION TWO:
PRELIMINARY FINAL:
UNDER 11: Illawarra Lions
2 bt Penrith Panthers 0.
UNDER 12: CSI Schofields
2 bt Macquarie Sports 1.

NSW YOUTH LEAGUES

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE

G13 - In the Major Semi Final there was to be no upsets when the Blacktown City Demons took on the Wollongong Wolves for a place in the Grand Final. The Demons were unbeaten in the 30 rounds of soccer they played during the regular season, and they advanced to that Grand Final with a 3-1 win over the Wolves.

Wollongong will therefore face the Newcastle Breakers this weekend, as the Breakers edged past Sydney Olympic 1-0 to end their opponent's season for 1999.

G14 - The Gladesville Hornsby Association is the first team into the Grand Final in the G14 competition after they had a great 2-1 win against Sydney Olympic. With Sydney United defeating the Blacktown City Demons 4-1 in the Minor Semi Final this weekend's Preliminary Final sees Sydney Olympic take on Sydney United, with the winner playing the association side in the Grand Final.

G15 - The Major Semi Final between the Blacktown City Demons and Marconi Fairfield went right down to the wire, after normal time and then extra time couldn't separate the two teams. It was 1-1 at the conclusion of extra time so the match went to penalties, and there it was the Demons who prevailed to advance to the Grand Final.

The Minor Semi Final, though, matched that as the Gladesville Hornsby Association and Southern Districts also finished 1-1 at the end of the game.

That also went to penalties, and in this one it was the Southern Districts who won through to face Marconi Fairfield in this week's Preliminary Final.

G16 - Sydney Olympic easily moved into the Grand Final after winning their Major Semi Final match with the Newcastle Breakers 3-0. The Breakers now face a tough battle in the Preliminary Final, as they will play Blacktown who just edged out the Leichhardt Tigers 2-1.

DIVISION ONE YOUTH LEAGUE

G13 - League leaders Illawarra had crashed last weekend in the Major Semi Final against the Bankstown Association, but they can get revenge now in the Grand Final after defeating the Blacktown Association 2-0 in the Preliminary Final.

G14 - Penrith Panthers defeated the

Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2-1 in Saturday's Preliminary Final, which means they will face Ryde City in the Grand Final this coming weekend.

G15 - AC United will be hot favourites to take the G15 Grand Final, and they watched as the Bonnyrigg White Eagles defeated Hills United 2-0 in the preliminary Final. AC United led the league from start to finish and will take some beating in the Grand Final.

G16 - The Blacktown Association will face their opponents from the Major Sem Final, the Bankstown Association, in the Grand Final after defeating the Stanmore Hawks 3-0 in the Preliminary Final.

DIVISION TWO YOUTH LEAGUE

G13 - The Grand Final saw the Nepean Association, who finished top of the table play the Ku-ring-gai Association. The Nepean Association would have fancied their chances after defeating their opponents in the Major Semi Final, but neither team were able to score in normal time.

The game went to extra time therefore, and it was the Ku-ring-gai Association who nipped in with the winner to take the game 1-0.

G14 - There was nothing between the Macquarie Sports and Mt Pritchard in the league, and it was the Macquarie Sports who won their Major Semi Final two weeks ago to advance into the Grand Final.

Mt Pritchard therefore played last week in the Preliminary Final and defeated the Camden Tigers 2-0, so all signs were for a tight game in the Grand Final.

It didn't work out that way though, as it was Mt Pritchard who took the honours, winning 3-0.

G15 - There was another surprise in the Grand Final, with Hajduk Wanderers expected to defeat Parramatta City after winning the league and also the Major Semi Final between the two teams.

Once again though, it counted for nothing as Parramatta City came away with the Grand Final courtesy of a 3-1 win.

G16 - Another Grand Final that couldn't be settled within normal time, as the Nepean Association and Camden Tigers finished 1-1. The game then went to extra time, and it was the Nepean Association who grabbed the winner in that extra period and took the game 2-1.

VICTORIA STATE LEAGUE REVIEW 1999

COMPILED BY

PICTURES BY
MICHAEL CROHIN

PORT MELBOURNE

Once again the Sharks have come up short at the end of a season in which they led for large chunks. With league top scorer Peter Kakos and Nick Tsaltas hitting the net regularly Port seemed set to lead the league from start to finish but a round 20 loss at Green Gully left them vulnerable and subsequent losses to Fawkner and Bentleigh handed the initiative to the Cavaliers.

Great credit must go to coach Peter Tsolakis, who took over on the eve of the season following Alan Davidson's sudden return to Malaysia. Well served at the back by the experienced Dean Fak and Jean Paul Knezevic, and in midfield by ex-Newcastle player Evis Heath and George Tzirtis, Port had an impressive array of attacking options with Kosta



Caimakamis and John Pappas also contributing goals at vital times.

Defender Roddy Vargas, currently trialling with the Melbourne Knights, is another player who can be well satisfied with his season's work, and his contribution may well be rewarded with the league's Under-21 Player of the Year award on October 16. With Kakos picking up the top scorers award, it might be a night to remember if Tsaltas and Tzirtis poll as well as expected in the Gold Medal

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Home	13	9	2	2	32	15	29
Away	13	7	3	3	27	19	24
Total	26	16	5	5	59	29	53

GREEN GULLY - CHAMPIONS



Afanasovski (8) and Brandon Vassallo (5) providing extra support from midfield.

Mention also must go to the midfield maestro George Svigos, and ex-Joeey Colin Azzopardi who will surely be NSL material in the not too distant future.

So, another championship win for Ian Dobson, who, after recent titles with Altona Magic at state level and the Melbourne Knights at national level, will be just about ready to order another display cabinet. And that goes double for Zdravko Afanasovski, who picked up his FIFTH consecutive Premier League championship winter's medal. The walking talisman 'three-peated' with Altona Magic in 95, 96 and 97, switched to Bulleen last season and then moved again to link up with Ian Dobson at Green Gully.



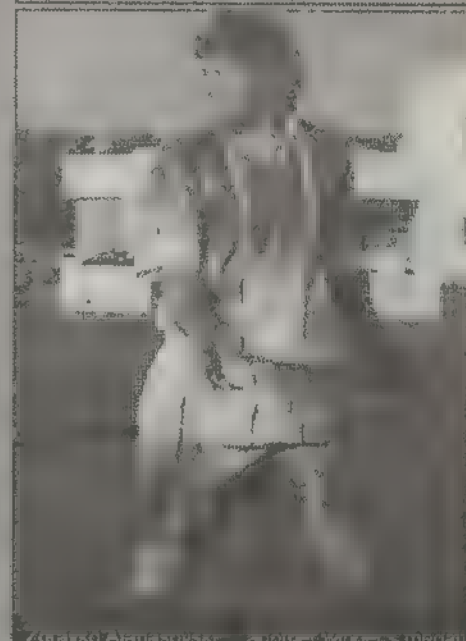
It's not unusual for a club to go through a season with a better away record than home record. But for a club's away record to be better than every other club's home record? They should romp home, right?

Well, not quite. But that was the startling fact to emerge from a season in which Green Gully never threatened to take the league apart, yet were always close enough to the top to suggest they would be in the photo finish.

The final margin over Port Melbourne may have been just three points and the head-to-head battles finished with a win apiece, but few would argue that the Cavaliers were the best team over the entire season, ending it with a 16 match unbeaten streak.

A solid backline of Steve Douglas, Steve Mangos and Zoran Markovski provided a safe platform for the Gully midfielders to probe forward towards a frontline that was equally comfortable with the long and short game. Tony Neceski finished as top scorer with ten goals but he was amply supported by Zlatko Donev (6) and Daniel Genovesi (7), with Zdravko

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Home	13	7	5	1	25	11	26
Away	13	9	3	1	33	14	30
Total	26	16	8	2	58	25	56



Zdravko Afanasovski - another winter's medal

BULLEEN INTER KINGS

Despite a six match unbeaten start to the season, the reigning champion just didn't seem to have the spark that took them to last year's title, but there was also an element of opponents raising their game against them as well.

A dreadful opening run at home which realised just three goals in six matches meant the back-to-back dreams were just that, while rumours of coach Gary Cole's imminent departure reached boiling point with a 0-4 loss at Port Melbourne - a result that pushed the Kings to within a point of the relegation zone at the halfway mark.

Four consecutive wins over the four relegated clubs proved the Kings weren't going down in a hurry, however one wonders where Bulleen may have finished had Danny Gnijdic and Vlad Babic not come to the rescue so often

Likely to have the bulk of the 98 title winning squad intact for next season so expect them to bounce back - if they can replace just a few of those ageing legs.



	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Home	13	5	4	5	17	16	16
Away	13	6	4	3	23	19	22
Total	26	10	8	8	40	35	38

BENTLEIGH GREENS

Although not quite reaching the heights of the 1997 team which finished second, Bentleigh will be the one team seriously rueing the lack of a finals series this year.

They finished the season in scintillating touch, averaging four goals a game in the last nine rounds, including a 9-0 demolition of South Dandenong, a match in which Harry Micheil scored four, surely a record for a full back!

They also effectively ended the title aspirations of both Preston (4-0) and Port Melbourne (3-0) in successive weeks, and when in top form were generally considered the most entertaining team in the league.

Juan Nilo was sensational at times, finishing with 22 goals including

three hat-tricks, two of them against Sunshine. The speedy John Papettas (12) and Stelkios Drakos (8) were also productive, while Tom McDonough had an outstanding year in midfield alongside Cameron Pino.

Goalkeeper Glenn Clarke was rarely at fault despite the odd flogging they received from Preston and Green Gully, and if the Greens can keep the squad intact, and perhaps add some height to the backline, then Bentleigh may well challenge for the title next season - finals or no finals

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Home	13	8	2	3	43	17	26
Away	13	5	4	4	24	14	19
Total	26	13	6	7	67	31	45

FAWKNER

As Fawkner lined up for their Round 9 clash with Bulleen they were sitting on the bottom of the table.

If anyone had told you at that point that the Blues would eventually finish fourth ..

But goals from Ivan Duzel and Peter Psarros at the Veneto Club triggered a seven match winning streak which saw the Blues sweep into mid-table and free themselves from relegation worries. A further mini-slump was arrested with five wins from the final six matches to finish just a point behind third-placed Preston. A marvellous turnaround from coach Ken Murphy and veteran Joe Biskic, and the figures don't lie,

but statistics can tell a number of stories and the fact remains that Fawkner picked up just four of a possible twenty-four points against the other teams in the top five.

Frank Tramontana had another fine season for Fawkner, with the experienced trio of Duzel, Biskic and Emmanuele also major contributors.

The Blues simply had too much talent in the squad to be relegation candidates yet some re-building is required if they want to become serious championship contenders.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Home	13	7	2	4	24	19	23
Away	13	7	2	4	24	14	23
Total	26	14	4	8	48	33	46

SOCCER CANBERRA

home from close range after a goal mouth scramble, and Monaro could even afford a penalty miss by Laz Simeonov

Greg Welsh reports that recently-crowned premiers the Capital City Suns rebounded from their demoralising loss to Monaro last week to defeat the Weston Creek Royals 2-0 in the ACT Premier League major semi-final at Riverside Stadium on Sunday.

The Suns booked themselves a place in the grand final thanks to goals from Yuki Onda and Tony Lemezina at the beginning of each half, leaving the Royals the difficult task of having to beat Monaro in next week's elimination game.

The Suns are notoriously lethal finishers, however on this occasion the forwards were outshone by a sparkling defensive effort from goalkeeper Tony Giannasca and fullbacks Peter Romaniuk, Tai Tran and Mil Sredojevic.

The Suns' back four earned special praise from coach Bill Dojcinski for the way they stifled the normally explosive Royals twin strike force of Steve Lazzari and Peter Hader, who together have amassed 34 goals so far this season.

The Royals had not lost to the Suns in their two previous encounters this year, but found themselves a goal behind after only six minutes of play.

Lemezina started the move with a square pass to striking partner Pat Phommaseisy who in turn played a delightful through ball for Onda. The Suns' midfielder charged into the Royals penalty area and rifled a stinging left-foot shot through goalkeeper Troy Boots' hands.

The move was nearly re-created almost 45 seconds later when Phommaseisy once more breached the Royals defence, this time with a clever back-heel.

However Onda sent his low shot whizzing narrowly wide of the far post on this occasion.

A minute later Weston Creek had their first clear-cut opportunity of the half when Hami Adhami's firmly struck cross found

Justin Webb only a metre or two out from goal. However the pace of the pass deceived Webb, and the ball slued off the side of his boot and harmlessly away from goal.

The Suns went further ahead two minutes after the half-time break courtesy of Lemezina's 21st goal of the season. The striker, who is a favourite of the parochial Suns' supporters, started the move by sending Luka Ujdur sprinting down the left-hand flank. The midfield dynamo nimbly cut inside Royals' captain Martin Lazzari before laying off for Lemezina to score.

Onda and Phommaseisy were denied further goals by a couple of excellent saves from Boots, before Giannasca duplicated the performance at the other end to frustrate two separate efforts from Hader.

Suns' coach Bill Dojcinski was rapt with his side's performance. "I think today we played the best game of our season so far," he said. "We really got stuck into it from the beginning of the game to the end."

A disappointed Jimmy Bland was left to reflect on what might have been.

"This game's all about making the most of your opportunities," he said.

"They had probably three chances all the game - and scored twice. We had six or seven good chances and we should have come away with something a little bit better."

In the minor semifinal Dylan Durie reports that Monaro have progressed to the ACT Premier League soccer preliminary final next week to meet Weston Creek after a convincing 5-2 win over Canberra Deakin in slippery conditions at Majura Oval yesterday.

Monaro took control of the minor semi-final in a five minute period midway through the first half when they took the lead through a wonderful curling left-footed free kick from Joe Campagna, then Deakin's Marcelo Munoz was sent off for

two rash challenges in quick succession.

Deakin equalised right before half time but Monaro never looked back after regaining the lead in the third minute of the second half.

Deakin settled into the game earlier than Monaro and could have scored after seven minutes when a Munoz free kick struck the cross bar from the edge of the area, but the warning woke Monaro up and they soon began to control the play.

The Deakin equaliser was an inch perfect 20m lob from Stan Dukic against the run of play in injury time, but Monaro veteran Jimmy Baxter stooped at the near post to nod home a Danny Macor cross from a free kick and restore his side's lead.

Monaro then had chance after chance and only a fine game in goal by Deakin's Pedro Pavez prevented a heavier defeat for his team.

The victory was sealed in the 58th minute when Danny Macor slid the ball

three minutes later after Pavez brought down Campagna.

Monaro added a fourth when John Rakic thumped home a low shot from 20m, before Deakin pulled one back after skillful work by Paul Ivanic who controlled nicely inside the area, beat his man and pushed the ball beyond the 'keeper for Gaby Exposito to score from point blank range.

Monaro's fifth was also Rakic's second when he scored with his left from outside the area with a perfectly placed shot to complete Deakin's misery.

Monaro coach Andrew Monterosso praised his players for their commitment, "We didn't have a bad player out there today," he said, "If we keep playing like this it doesn't matter who we play we could go right through now."

NEXT WEEK: Jimmy Hayes and his career

PREMIER LEAGUE DIVISION 1:

Major Semi-Finals:

1st Grade Capital City Suns 2 Weston Creek Royals 0
U23's University of Canberra 1 Belconnen United 2

Minor Semi-Finals:

1st Grade Monaro 5 Canberra Deakin 2
U23's Weston Creek Royals 2 Monaro 2
AET - Weston Creek Royals won 9-8 on penalties

Youth Quarter-Finals:

Belconnen United 3 Southern Spirit 0 (on forfeit)
Gungahlin Juventus 8 Belwest Foxes 3
University of Canberra 2 Belconnen Utd 0
Canberra Deakin 1 Tuggeranong United 3

PREMIER LEAGUE DIVISION 2:

Major Semi-Finals:

1st Grade: O'Connor Knights 1

Tuggeranong United 3
Reserve Grade O'Connor Knights 3
Tuggeranong United 2 AET

Minor Semi-Finals

1st Grade. Cooma 0 ANU 2
Reserve Grade. ANU 1 Belwest Foxes 0

NEXT WEEK:

Division 1 Preliminary Finals - Sunday
September 12th

Hawker Oval
1st Grade. Weston Creek Royals v Monaro
U23's University of Canberra v Weston Creek Royals

Division 2 Preliminary Finals - Saturday
September 11th

Majura Oval
1st Grade O'Connor Knights v ANU
Reserve Grade Tuggeranong United v ANU

ILLAWARRA PREMIER LEAGUE

Congratulations to Northern United, the Illawarra Credit Union Premier League Champions. They finished the season on a high with a resounding 5-0 victory over the last placed Fernhill team.

Northern finished a clear four points in front of the second placed Port Kembla and now earn themselves a one week rest in the top five play-offs.

The semi final games kick off on Sunday 19th September with the elimination final game between Kemblawarra and Coniston Lions, the fifth and fourth placed teams.

In the qualifying final the second placed team Port Kembla play the third place Bulli team. The winner of that game meets Northern United the following week to determine which team goes into the grand final first.

In the last round of the premiership both Northern United and Bulli recorded strong victories with the latter beating Wollongong Olympic four goals to nil.

In the match of the round second placed Port Kembla had too much class for the fourth placed Coniston winning two goals to nil.

Meanwhile, in the Bampton Cup competition First Division Wollongong University continued its giant killing run by beating Premier League outfit Woonona 2-1 to set up a clash with Port Kembla. In the other semi final Northern United meets Bulli. Both of these semi finals will be played tomorrow night.

ICU Premier League Final Table

Northern United	53
Port Kembla	49
Bulli	48
Coniston	40
Kemblawarra	35
Lysaghts	28
W. Olympic	26
Cringila Lions	26
White Eagles	25
Shoalhaven City	22
Woonona	19
Fernhill	4

ICU Premier League Results - Rd 22

Cringila Lions	2	Kemblawarra	2
Port Kembla	2	Coniston	0
Northern United	5	Fernhill	0
Bulli	4	W. Olympic	0
Woonona	3	Shoalhaven	1
White Eagles	2	Lysaghts	4

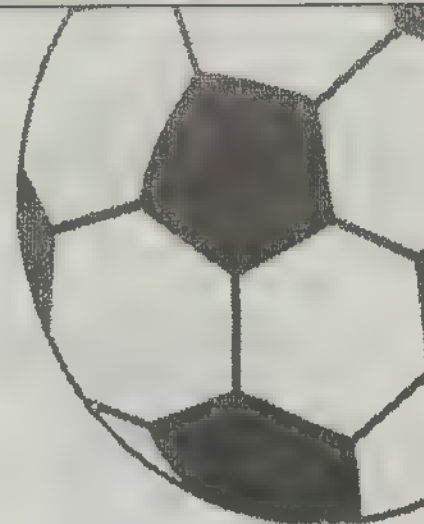
ICU First Division Results - Rd 22

Dapto	1	Tarrawanna	0
Bellambi	1	University	1
Warrilla Wand	3	Highlands	1
Helensburgh	3	South Coast	0
Kiama	2	Shellharbour	1
Barbs	4	Berkeley	1
Balgownie	1	Albion Park	1



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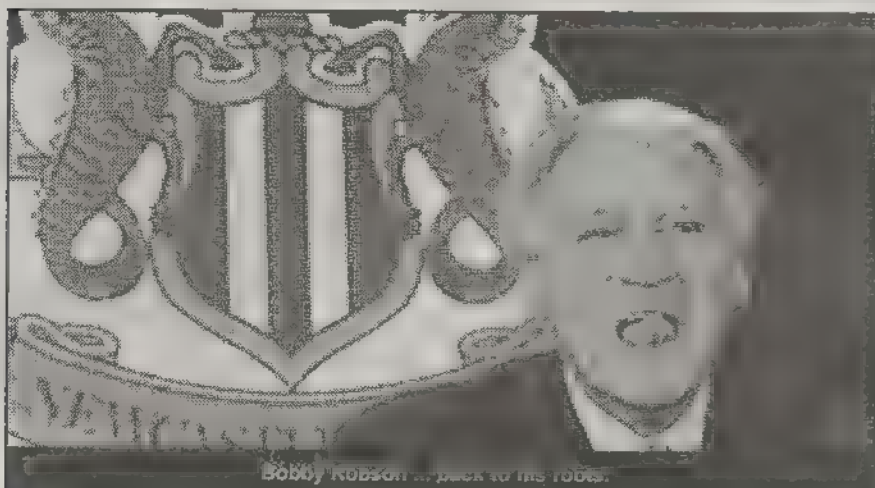
ILLAWARRA CREDIT UNION

PREMIER LEAGUE SEMI FINALS

Sunday 19th September (Venues to be decided)

Kemblawarra v Coniston Lions

Bulli v Port Kembla



Bobby Robson: back to his roots.

ROBSON ANSWERS THE CALL

Gullit's departure last Saturday and it is his first job in English league football since leaving Ipswich to manage the national side in 1982.

The 66-year-old revealed he was not worried that he had only been given a one-year deal by the Magpies.

He said: "At my age, I'm not looking for three, four or five years' security."

"I'm not a 37-year-old fellow with a wife and seven kids and a big mortgage and worried about security and a five-year contract."

"Please God, I'm over that. My security is my ability and my talent and my quality. That's your contract."

"We amicably agreed that I'd come for one year, stabilise the ship and save the club from getting relegated. That's the priority, that's the emphasis and that's my brief."

"I'll be doing other things while I'm here at the club. I will look at the structure of the club and I will see what the playing side is and what the technical side is, and if I can improve or change that, then I will inform the board."

"First, it's getting great results, re-instilling confidence, enthusiasm and self-belief back to the players so they can start playing effective, confident football to get the results."

"If at the end of the season we have done that and we feel that we're capable of doing that, then we can think again about the future."

Robson recognised that his predecessors have spent heavily and stressed that he would not

be making sweeping changes at the club in the short term.

"I need to look at the players quickly and establish in my mind what we have," he said.

"The club have spent a massive sum of money on the present staff."

"My job is to - as quickly as I can - ascertain what the present quality is and find out if it is sufficient."

"It maybe that we do not have to spend and change the staff. I want first to look at the staff."

"Everyone has a chance. Everyone starts fresh. That applies to technical staff too - they deserve an opportunity."

"When I decide what has to be done I will offer my views to the board."

"At the present moment I have no desire to change. The number two is Steve Clarke. I am very impressed with him."

"I asked for information. He gave it to me willingly and honestly."

"At this moment there are no changes, until I have had a look at the situation."

Robson rejected the idea that the pressure of the job he has taken on could be overwhelming.

"I am not worried. We have the best group of fans in the whole wide world and they're not too demanding. They understand things."

"I saw the Sunderland match. I saw the crowd. It is not a pressure point when you see those fans."

"I've worked at Barcelona. When things are not going well 100,000 fans wave handkerchiefs at you."

"I know the public will give the players a chance. If the fans see the players are giving their

best they will be patient."

"For such a fantastic group of people we have to bring about a set of results that the board and fans deserve."

"The club needs a win badly and I have to re-instil confidence, enthusiasm and self-belief in the players to give them the chance to stop the poor results they've had and achieve the results we all feel sure the players are capable of."

"We've got to plug a few holes and steady the ship."

"The priority is to turn the club around in terms of Premiership results."

Asked how long he had coveted the Newcastle job, Robson replied: "I was first interested in being manager when I saw Jackie Milburn in 1950. I thought it would be good to do that job."

"If you'd said a few years ago that Kevin Keegan and I would swap jobs you wouldn't have believed it. But it happened."

Robson said he would be in touch with the England coach but did not intend ringing him while he is preparing for the Euro 2000 qualifiers against Luxembourg at Wembley on Saturday and against Poland in Warsaw next Wednesday.

"It would not be right for me to distract Kevin Keegan from the task he has this week," said Robson.

"I'll take the opportunity to wish him good luck and, at some later stage, I'm sure I'll have some dialogue with Kevin Keegan."

Newcastle chairman Freddie Shepherd, welcoming Robson's return to his North-East roots, said: "He is someone we have long admired."

Bobby Robson answered Newcastle's SOS and stepped into the job he has always wanted admitting: "I thought my chance had gone."

The 66-year-old former England manager was unveiled as Ruud Gullit's successor at a St James' Park press conference and promised "no panic" and "no changes" as he bids to steady the Newcastle ship.

Robson inherits a side in turmoil, with just one point from six Premiership games, but insisted the situation was "retrievable" and emphasised that he was relishing the challenge ahead.

The County Durham-born miner's son, who turned down the same job in 1997 because of his commitments at Spanish giants Barcelona, said: "I thought Barcelona was big but this has pipped it."

"It's great to be back and I'm proud, honoured and thrilled," said Robson, who has only signed a contract until the end of the current season.

"It was rather ironic this morning but I followed a car from where I was staying into the club and the registration was SOS 1."

"I don't know how ironic that

was but I get the message."

"It was the right club to come to two years ago but I was at Barcelona then and I had to fulfil my contract."

"I thought the chances of my coming here had gone then. I thought Kenny Dalglish would be long term."

"Then I went to PSV Eindhoven. After Kenny left I thought I might have been in the reckoning."

"But I thought Ruud Gullit was a long term appointment. I thought it (the Newcastle job) had gone. But that is football."

"I realise I have a massive job ahead of me. It is a great challenge. I am up for it. I am not afraid of it. I don't underestimate it."

"I am going to enjoy working here. The priority is to bring about a change in fortunes, stabilise the club and ensure that next year Premiership status is still at Newcastle and that we have made progress."

"There is no panic. It is retrievable and I'm confident I can do it."

Robson is charged with the task of putting the Magpies back among the elite after years of under-achieving.

He emerged as the leading contender within minutes of

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mark Bosnich is facing life in the shadows at Manchester United, only two months into his Old Trafford career.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson revealed that new signing Massimo Taibi will make his debut at Liverpool next weekend.

And the Old Trafford chief has made it clear he will keep faith with Taibi if he comes through the ultimate test of nerve against United's fiercest rivals. Bosnich has been out for the last three weeks with a hamstring strain, but had hoped to play at Anfield. Now, even if the former Aston Villa goalkeeper can prove his fitness, Fergie still intends to pitch Taibi into a Premiership baptism of fire.

He said: "Massimo has experience at the highest level in Italy. He

will start against Liverpool but I'm sure Mark will respond in the right fashion." Ferguson is convinced that Taibi, a £4.5million signing from Venezia, will handle the intense atmosphere of a feverish, sell-out Anfield. "We have watched Massimo for a long time," he said. "He has great experience of pressure matches."

Me a n w h i l e Ferguson has also admitted that Manchester United will kick off their Champions' League campaign without skipper Roy Keane.

The United boss is resigned to being without his influential midfielder following a hamstring injury that forced Keane to pull out of the Republic of Ireland squad for their European Championship qualifiers against Croatia and Malta.

Ferguson believes Keane's injury is a 'three-week job'. He has ruled him out of next Saturday's Premiership clash with Liverpool at Anfield and said: "There has to be doubts about him for our first two games in the Champions League."

United are due to play Croatia Zagreb at Old Trafford three days after the trip to Anfield then eight days later are away to Sturm Graz in Austria.

If Keane is still not fit by then it would mean he will also miss the home game against Wimbledon which comes between the two European fixtures.

Irish team-mate Denis Irwin is also likely to miss the Liverpool game with a recurrence of an Achilles tendon injury.

JUNINHO IS BACK AT 'BORO

Juninho has admitted he is keen to stay at Middlesbrough when his loan spell finishes in May.

The little Brazilian aims to shoot Middlesbrough up the Premiership table when he joins from Atletico Madrid.

Boro have paid £1.4million to secure the Brazilian's services until the end of the season when they will have an option to make the move permanent for an additional £6.5million.

Speaking to Spanish sports newspaper Marca, Juninho said: "I am going with the intention of signing permanently for Middlesbrough."

"I am leaving many friends here but this group of players is going to win something because of the great dressing room atmosphere."

"I am leaving to be a success at Middlesbrough. I will be confident there and that is of great importance to me."

"I was told it would be difficult to play over here and I need to play when I am not injured."

"I have had problems in the past and this year I needed confidence to play which is why I am moving."

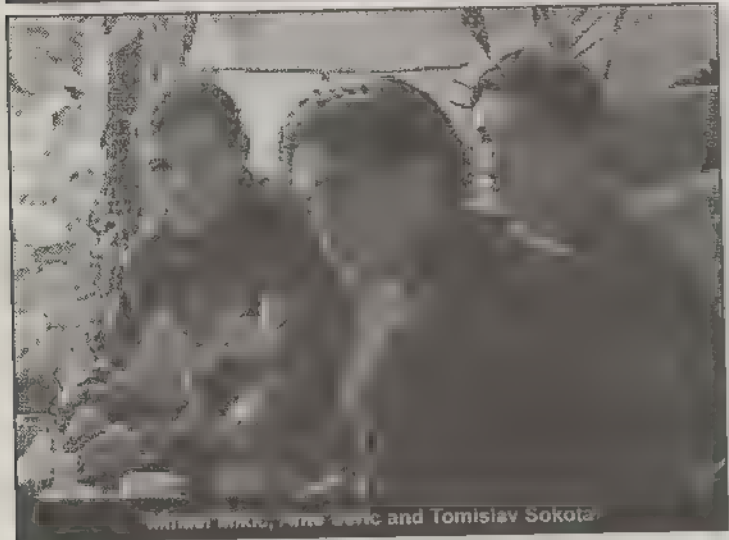
The player concluded: "But I



cannot remain a player who just makes up numbers in training."

If, as expected, his work permit is granted, Juninho should make his second Boro debut at home to Southampton on September 11 or in the televised game at Leeds.

CROATIA MARCHES ON



Croatia 5 Ireland 1

Croatia clinched qualification for next summer's European Under 21 Championship finals with a comprehensive 5-1 victory over Ireland.

Ian Evans and his Republic of Ireland youngsters suffered an afternoon of humiliation and pain with Leeds United midfielder Stephen McPhail taken off badly injured and Everton's Richard Dunne sent off.

McPhail's injury was diagnosed as damaged ankle ligaments but he was sent for an X-ray which the Irish party hoped would clear fears that there was also a fracture.

But the agony was far from over and when Dunne was deservedly given his marching orders three minutes from half time, with the Irish already 3-1 down, it was his second red card in less than two weeks.

He had also been dismissed in Everton's defeat Premiership defeat at Derby.

The Republic arrived with still a remote hope of finishing top of the group themselves but the victory they needed to keep the dream alive was never on the cards against high-quality opposition.

And it was a talented trio from the local Croatia Zagreb club, Manchester United's first Champions League opponents later this month, who struck the decisive blows - all three scoring in the first half.

In truth their domination of the Irish was no surprise following their recent 6-2 ham-

mering of Yugoslavia - even though Evans's team had held the Croatia youngsters to a 2-2 draw in Kilkenny a year ago.

That result seemed a lifetime ago in rainy Zagreb as the Republic boys were left reeling after only six minutes when McPhail was stretchered off, legs ominously strapped together, following his chal-



lenge for a 50-50 midfield ball.

And it got worse and worse just six minutes later when Renato Pilipovic opened the scoring with a backward, glancing header as he rose with two defenders for Ivan Leko's free-kick and deflected the ball neatly past the helpless Alex O'Reilly.

The West Ham goalkeeper, currently on loan to Northampton, was also helpless to prevent a second goal nine minutes after that when Tomo Sokota launched himself forward to score with a brave diving header from a cross by Mihael Mikic.

But he was badly culpable for the third within two minutes when he spilled Zvonimir Deranja's speculative long-range drive and

Mark c gratefully slotted in

It could have been even worse if Swedish referee Lef Sundell had spotted the Millwall full back back Robbie Ryan stamping

on an opponent but an odd sort of justice eventually prevailed when Dunne was shown the red card in the 42nd minute after he cynically took the legs of Mikic after the little striker slipped past him on a clear run to goal.

It took the edge off a pugnacious reply by the outclassed but gallant Irish two minutes earlier, when Dunne's centre-back partner Colin Hawkins rose to thump home a header from Barry Quinn's corner.

To their immense credit the 10 men battled on resolutely in the second half, defending stoutly and raising more than a few brave counter-attacks.

But there was little penetration even though Evans revamped his strike-force with the more subtle Daryl Clare replacing bustling Barry Conlon just before the hour.

By then the Croats had taken their foot off the pedal and were content to coast to their top-place clinching success. It was only with two minutes to go that they really stepped on the gas again for substitute Bosko Balaban to ram in two more goals.

Dundee United defender Dave Worrell equalled the Irish record for Under 21 caps with 17 appearances - only to have it taken away from him when Alan Mahon came on as a second half sub, replacing Quinn, to win his own 18th cap.

Croatia: Pletikosa Sabolick, Senc Mladin Vranjes, Smoje, Pilipovic, Sokota (Tomic 81), Mikic (Balaban 72), Leko (Bratkovic 54), Deranja.
Goals: Pilipovic 12, Sokota 21, Mikic 23, Balaban 88, 90.
Rep of Ireland: O'Reilly, Boxall, Ryan, Worrell, Hawkins, Dunne, McPhail (Rowlands 6), O'Brien, Conlon (Clare 56), Fenn, Quinn (Mahon 73).
Goals: Hawkins 40.

INJURY TIME WINNER

Croatia 1 Ireland 0

ronal's Croatia striker Davor Suker broke the hearts of Alex McCarthy's fighting Republic of Ireland side with a sickening stoppage-time goal in Zagreb to give his side a 1-0 win and throw the qualifying race for Euro 2000 right back into the melting point.

The 18-month new Currier who has yet to make his obligatory mark after missing a penalty against Liverpool last Saturday, had baffled a trio of sitters that gave the Republic, impressive winners against Yugoslavia in Dublin four days ago, burgeoning hope of staying top of Group Eight going into next Wednesday's meeting with the minnows of Malta in Valletta.

But just in the nick of time as the Croats were beginning to aim derisive whistles at their team, Sukerman put on his red cloak and big blue shooting boots to fire the winner with all the predatory style that made him top scorer at last year's World Cup.

Ireland thought they had survived the worst - getting 10 men back behind the ball in manager McCarthy's pragmatic 4-5-1 system that sacrificed last Wednesday's scorers Mark Kennedy and £6million Robbie Keane for the honest toil of veteran Tony Cascarino in an exhausting solo role up front.

Alan Kelly made a string of athletic saves, Kenny Cunningham, Lee Carsley and Gary Breen tackled like tigers - and Suker put the best three chances with of the mark.

But just when the Zagreb crowd were beginning to sink into a depressing slum of predictable attacks, Robert Kovac popped a long, low ball under the bar into the middle and, for the second time, Suker took off the chains of his dedicated markers.

The first time, 12 minutes earlier, he had fired Ajosa Asanovic's pass wide of the mark with only Kelly to beat. This time he planted his shot firmly in the corner to the delight of the home fans - and the stunning depression of 1500 travelling Irish supporters.

But it could be worse - even if Croatia are now back on top of the group two points ahead of the Irish.

A Republic win against Malta will put McCarthy's men back in command and knowing that if they finish level with Croatia on points in the final reckoning they will still come out on top of them by virtue of their head-to-head battles which began in Dublin a year ago with a 2-0 Irish win.

Suker missed that match through injury and Croatia had two men sent off, but this time they kept their discipline and kept plugging away to finally put a painful postscript to Ireland's great win over Yugoslavia, the group's top seeds.

It means Ireland have now lost both their away games 1-0 to Yugoslavia and Croatia having won all four home matches, but McCarthy will certainly not accept they are out of contention for the finals although they have to settle for the runners-up play-offs.

Croatia, who have only one game left - against Yugoslavia on October 10 - took their time establishing a grip as the Irish made a



neat and tidy start but by the quarter-hour mark had begun building up an ominous head of steam.

Asanovic sent speedy left back Robert Jarni racing clear on his flank only to overhit the cross with team-mates arriving in numbers in the box.

Then Milan Rapalic's speculative long, low shot deflected off Breen and the diving Kelly was relieved to see it go just wide for a corner.

Skipper Suker, who had volleyed over in the seventh minute after getting in behind Steve Staunton to connect with a Slaven Bilic cross, looked certain to open the scoring in the 14th minute when, with Damien Duff seeming to be fouled in the build up, he ran clear in the box - only to be robbed by a stunning recovery tackle by Cunningham just as he was about to shoot.

Within a minute Kelly had to make a marvellous save with his legs when Asanovic slipped in a precise low ball for Zvonimir Soldo, with Robert Kovac fashing the rebound over the bar.

It took Ireland 24 minutes to force their first corner and Cascarino had barely had a touch up to then, let alone the opportunity to equal the Irish goalscoring record of 20 for which he needed just one more strike. In the end the corner count 19 to two - amply summed up Croatia's dominance.

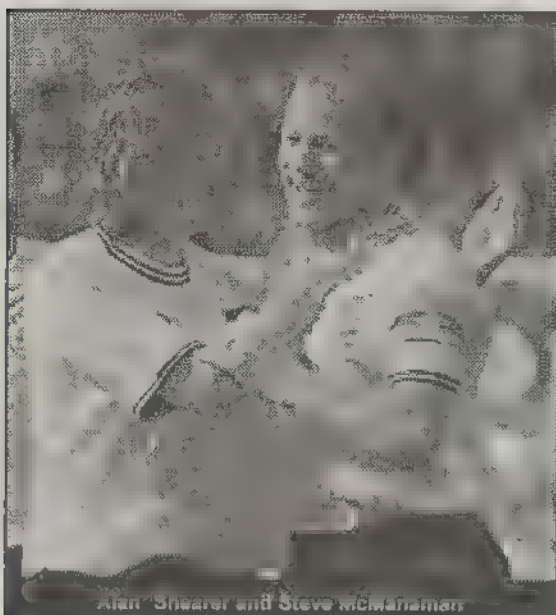
But Ireland had come to defend and they rarely wavered. Gary Kelly of Leeds was playing his first full game for more than a year having been out all last season with shin splints.

The Irish did not deserve their late punishment, but in the end it was an echo of Belgrade last November - deep, defence until one error broke the dam.

They looked like they would survive this time against a team never beaten in Zagreb in 15 internationals and semi finalists at France 98.

Croatia: Ladic, D. Simic, Jarni, Soldo, Stimac, Bilic (Rukavina 46), Asanovic, Stanic (J. Simic 35), Suker, Rapalic, R. Kovac.
Goals: Suker 90.
Rep of Ireland: A. Kelly, Carr, Cunningham, Breen, Staunton, Carsley, McLoughlin, Kinsella, G. Kelly (Harte 72), Duff (Kilbane 56), Cascarino (Quinn 82).
Crowd: 26,000

SHEARER STRIKES



Alan Shearer and Steve McManaman

The part-timers of Luxembourg proved the perfect antidote to Alan Shearer's woes as the England captain struck his first hat-trick for his country as they stormed to a 6-0 victory in their Euro 2000 qualifier at Wembley.

Assailed from all sides by his critics, Shearer provided the perfect riposte with three goals in the space of 24 first-half minutes.

England took a 5-0 lead by half-time before then completing the match almost at walking pace, with Steve McManaman also finally giving a convincing performance which was capped by his first goals for his country.

Then there was the perfect sight in injury time as Michael Owen - on as a 63rd-minute substitute - curled a wonderful strike into the far corner with the last kick of the match.

Overall, it was the perfect preparation for tomorrow's far more crucial game against Poland, when England's pretensions of reaching the Euro 2000 play-offs will be properly tested.

However, realistically, as a warm-up for the main event, this was more like an opera singer clearing her throat in the dressing-room, such was the paucity of the Luxembourg team, who would surely struggle in the Third Division.

For all that, though, the new Newcastle boss Bobby Robson, who was ironically the guest of honour at Wembley, must have been shaking his head in disbelief at the crisis up at St James' Park.

For not only was Shearer cutting swathes

through the Luxembourg defence, but so was Kieron Dyer, who produced a sparkling debut before being substituted at half-time due to injury.

Time after time, he overlapped with unbridled confidence from what was technically a full-back's role but was in truth more like an attacking midfielder's.

Plaudits are also due to Ray Parlour, David Batty, who ran the game in the first half, and Robbie Fowler, whose movement was exemplary in ceaseless unselfish runs up front to create space.

All in all, a job well done, with only Stuart Pearce being booked, but England will find Poland in Warsaw a completely different proposition as they chase victory.

But this display left England coach Kevin Keegan in optimistic mood ahead of that game - and overjoyed with hat-trick hero Shearer.

"I'm delighted for him," said Keegan. "He's got faith in himself. He doesn't need people to have faith in him but sometimes it would help if we backed our heroes a bit more."

"People like him write their own stories and that (the hat-trick) will have given him a tremendous boost for England and Newcastle United."

Keegan was equally delighted with the first-half contribution of Dyer.

"His was a tremen-

England 6 Luxembourg 0

dous performance. I thought he was our inspiration in the first half," he said.

"We made a couple of changes and people had their say about them but overall I thought it worked as well as could be expected," added the England coach.

"I was pleased. I thought they applied themselves really well in the first half."

"The second half was a bit disappointing but they (Luxembourg) dug in and we were a bit more static."

Shearer's hat-trick apart, Keegan could also celebrate Owen's spectacular late strike.

"Michael needed 30-odd minutes and he got them," said Keegan. "Everyone needs strikers to get goals and he got a great one for us."

England's win brought with it a few injury worries. Tony Adams suffered a dead leg and Keegan revealed that David Beckham had "a slight problem with his hamstring".

But Keegan was upbeat about England's prospects in Wednesday's final Euro 2000 qualifier against Poland in Warsaw when a win would earn a play-off place.

"We'll need cool heads, composure at the right time and a lot of grit and determination out there, but we'll put out a team that's capable of getting the right result in Poland," said Keegan.

At least Shearer will have been boosted immeasurably by his hat-trick and it was the perfect way to end a fortnight in which he has been left on the bench by Ruud Gullit, condemned as "childish" by Graham Kelly and castigated as a has-been by Malcolm Macdonald.

Within a minute of the kick-off, he had given Luxembourg due warning of his intentions as he forced keeper Philippe Felgen into a fine parry.

England: Martyn, Dyer (G. Neville 46), Keown, Adams (R. Neville 65), Pearce, McManaman, Beckham (Owen 65), Batty, Parlour, Shearer, Fowler.
Goals: Shearer 12 pen, 28, McManaman 30, Shearer 34, McManaman 44, Owen 90.
Luxembourg: Felgen, Feron, Schauls, Birsens, Funck, Saibene, Theis, Vanek, Christophe (Zantiski 63), Schnieder (Alverdi 46), Posing (F. Deville 63).
Crowd: 68,772

Ireland 2 Yugoslavia 1

Republic of Ireland young guns Robbie Keane and Mark Kennedy fired Mick McCarthy's European Championship hopefuls to an outstanding victory over Yugoslavia in Dublin last Wednesday night.

The fighting Irish turned over the Group Eight aristocrats with their best performance in years at a roaring, rumbustious Lansdowne Road.

Teenager Keane and 23-year-old winger Kennedy fired spectacular strikes to crown a display that put them a point clear at the top of the section (prior to the Croatia game) and had the watching Jack Charlton reliving the glory days when he was in charge.

A first half full of Irish industry and technical excellence had the Yugoslavs, who had arrived unbeaten in four previous matches in the group, reeling in alarm and surprise as they were simply outplayed.

The visitors were lucky to go in at the break with their goal intact and the only doubt about McCarthy's jolly green army was whether they could produce the finishing touches to their stylish build-ups.

Keane, the £6million Coventry signing who has scored three goals in as many matches for his new Premiership club, answered that within 10 minutes of the interval with a glorious, sweeping right-footer to despatch Denis Irwin's cross decisively beyond goalkeeper Aleksandar Kocic, who had clearly expected the giant Niall Quinn to get his head to it instead.

But then suddenly, and stomach-churningly for the celebrating 31,400 crowd, the Republic battlers seemed to lose the plot.

And it threatened to cost them dear when Predrag Mijatovic, the world-class Fiorentina striker, turned provider with a 61st-minute cross from deep on the left.

Two near misses by the Yugoslavs in the next five minutes had the Irish fans holding their breath - and fearing the worst.

But then the famous Irish spirit took over and materialised in a stunning winner by Kennedy, the left-footed right winger McCarthy has always shown such faith in.

From out of nowhere he blazed away from 25 yards and although two earlier efforts had finished in the crowd, this time his aim



was true - no doubt inspired by the success in his career he is finally tasting at new club Manchester City.

Kocic was no more than a spectator as the ball exploded in the net behind him.

The remaining 20 minutes must have seemed like a lifetime to the crowd as well as McCarthy, but if Yugoslavia had managed to come back again it would have been a total travesty of all justice.

It didn't happen - and it was carnival time at the final whistle sounded like a triumphant trumpet note to the delirious fans.

Robbie Keane was named man of the match and his goal was his third in 10 international appearances. The 19-year-old striker is sure to become a star. The only worry was that both Irwin and, more significantly, the inspiring Roy Keane had to leave the park early with injuries.

Rep of Ireland: A. Kelly, Irwin (Carr 66), Cunningham, Breen, Staunton, Kennedy, R. Keane (Carsley 71), Kinsella, Kilbane, R. Keane, Quinn (Casciano 77).
Goals: R. Keane 54, Kennedy 70.
Yugoslavia: Kocic, Komljenovic, Bolic, Govedanica, Djuric, Stankovic, Nadj (Kovacevic 74), Mijatovic, Milosevic, Savicevic (Drulovic 56), Mihajlovic (Saveljic 69).
Goals: Stankovic 61.

WALES LEAVES IT LATE

Belarus 1 Wales 2

An 87th minute goal by Ryan Giggs gave Wales a 2-1 victory over Belarus in their Group One clash in Minsk.

Mark Hughes had taken over for his first match in charge and he saw his committed team stick to their task and snatch the winning goal with just three minutes left.

It came when Giggs headed inside the far post from six yards - his sixth goal in 25 internationals - after Andy Melville had flicked on a Robert Page long throw.

It keeps Wales' Euro 2000 hopes alive - they now have to beat Switzerland in their last Group One game to give themselves a chance of reaching the play-offs.

After weathering the initial Belarus storm, Wales found themselves behind after 28 minutes when Vasily Baranov was allowed to collect the ball in midfield and when no challenge arrived he smashed a 25-yarder into the top right hand corner of the net.

But Dean Saunders, who was winning his 70th cap - only the sixth Welshman to reach such a milestone - levelled after 42 minutes.

Two defenders failed to clear a corner

and Gary Speed struck a low drive that bounced viciously in front of the keeper who dropped the ball allowing the veteran marksman to smash home the rebound.

Belarus wasted a couple of chances late when Kulchy saw Jones make a fine save and then the Southampton keeper somehow touched onto the bar a 30-yarder from Baranov.

Then Giggs, who has seen so much personal triumph with his club, produced a moment of real magic for his country.

Memories of previous embarrassing defeats in former Soviet republics came flooding back when the Welsh went behind but Hughes insisted: "My players were very strong mentally and did not intend to be beaten."

"It had been important from our point of view to set the tone to be very professional in our outlook and preparation."

Belarus: Tumilovich, Tarlovski, Lavrik, Lukhovich, Ostrovski, Gurenko, Baranov, Chalka, Kulchii, Makovski, Orlovski (Romaschenko 60).
Goals: Baranov 30.
Wales: P. Jones, Page, Barnard, Melville, Coleman, Pennington (P. Robinson 80), J. Robinson, Saunders, Blake, Speed, Giggs.
Goals: Saunders 42, Giggs 86.
Crowd: 25,000.

SCOTS FIGHT ON

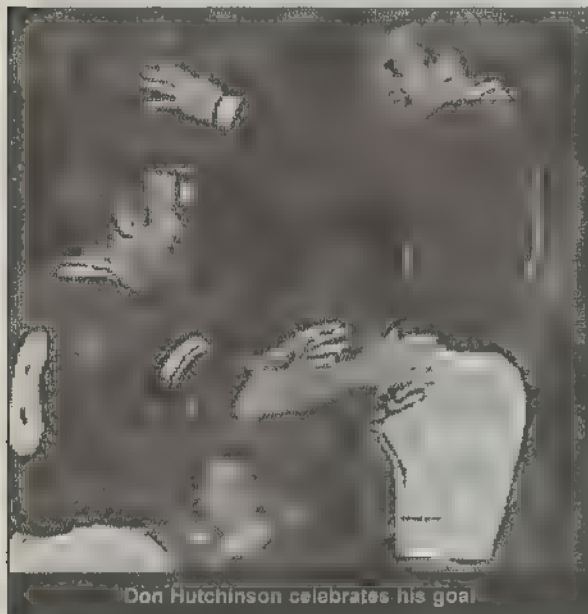
Billy Dodds kept Scotland in line for a play-off spot from Group Nine with a spectacular winner in Sarajevo.

The Czech Republic have already qualified for the finals of Euro 2000. Now Craig Brown's boys are heading in the direction of the back door to Holland and Belgium.

Dodds scored his fourth goal of the qualifying campaign on the stroke of half-time after Elvir Bolic had cancelled out Don Hutchison's opener.

Dundee United striker Dodds is a tireless worker and his enthusiasm for the game rubbed off on his team-mates.

This was a battling performance by Scotland after the defeat in the Czech Republic and the draw against the Faroe Islands.



Don Hutchinson celebrates his goal

Perhaps they have played with more style but this was a night for strong hearts, rather than neat football.

Now they head for Estonia tomorrow when another victory will almost certainly secure that play-off spot.

Colin Hendry was recalled to the Scotland side tonight despite not having played a full match for Rangers since recovering from a pelvic operation.

Manager Craig Brown banked on Hendry's inspirational presence to propel the nation closer to a play-off spot for Euro 2000.

He was proved right as the big Rangers defender helped to galvanise those around him.

Brown opted for a 3-5-2 formation with the former Blackburn central defender partnering Colin Calderwood and David Weir.

Bosnia 1 Scotland 2

Scotland went into this Group Nine qualifier in second spot ahead of tonight's hosts but only on goal difference.

Everton striker Hutchison was recalled to the starting line-up after missing the double-header against the Faroe Islands and the Czech Republic as he was on his honeymoon.

Coventry defender Muhamed Konjic was included in a Bosnian side, who were backed by a fiercely partisan crowd at the Kosovo Olympic Stadium.

Hendry's lack of match fitness became obvious after just nine minutes when Marko Topic left him trailing. It needed a timely clearance from David Hopkin to avert the danger.

Scotland opened the scoring in the 12th

Bakir Besirevic dispossessed the Rangers midfielder and laid the ball into the path of Elvir Bolic.

He still had a bit of work to do but raced forward and skipped round keeper Neil Sullivan to score.

Bosnia moved up a gear and Scotland were badly exposed down the right on the half hour when a shot from Sergej Baranec came back off the post.

Ferguson, whose mistake led to the Bosnian goal, played a delightful ball into the path of Burley but his touch let him down again.

Dodds then found the roof of the net following a fine pass from Burley putting Scotland back in front on the stroke of half-time.

The tireless Dundee United striker robbed Hibic and went round Besirevic before smashing an unstoppable shot from the edge of the area into the top corner.

Scotland boss Brown brought on Christian Daily for Colin Calderwood at the break but he didn't look comfortable on the left side of defence.

Topic managed to skip away from the Blackburn star in the 55th minute, only to screw his shot across the face of the goal.

Bosnia looked dangerous on the break and Bolic was narrowly off target after a fine cross from Meho Kodro.

Scotland had a narrow escape in the 71st minute when Bolic looked like scoring a second goal and pulling the home side level.

However Hendry showed marvellous positional sense to stick out a leg and divert the ball to safety.

The Bosnians were beginning to tire and Scotland could have extended their lead in the last 10 minutes.

McCann picked out sub Kevin Gallacher in front of goal but his shot was easily taken by Dedic, then Sullivan lofted a clearance onto Hutchison's chest, only for Dodds' effort to come back off the keeper.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Dedic (Raph 78), Mujica (Dernovic 78), Konjac, Hibic, Besirevic, Bolic, Harovic (Mujic 62), Kodro, Baranec, Topic.
Goals: Bolic 23.
Scotland: Sullivan, Hendry, Calderwood, Daily 46, Weir, Hopkin, Ferguson (Durrant 70), Burley, Collins, McCann (Gallacher 75), Hutchison, Dodds.
Goals: Hutchison 13, Dodds 45.

NTH IRELAND BOWS OUT

Northern Ireland 0 Turkey 3

Arif Erdem scored a hat-trick inside four mad minutes to administer the last rites to Northern Ireland's Euro 2000 qualification hopes.

The Turkey striker, who before today had only scored three times in 28 international appearances, capitalised on some slack Irish defending either side of half-time at Windsor Park.

Arif bagged his first in first-half stoppage time before he netted his second 40 seconds after the interval and his third in the 49th minute.

The Galatasaray hitman's three goals extinguished Northern Ireland's faint hopes of reaching next summer's finals in the Low Countries.

The Irish are in real danger of finishing their campaign with just one win - their final two games are away to Germany on Wednesday and Finland next month.

The defeat will inevitably turn the heat back up on manager Lawrie McMenemy, who had appeared to be making some progress before today.

His contract expires at the end of this qualifying campaign and there will be those among the Northern Ireland fans who will not want to see it renewed.

The scoreline was a repeat of Turkey's victory over the Irish 12 months ago in Istanbul, but the performances were very different.

Northern Ireland held their own for the first 45 minutes before they committed the equivalent of footballing suicide at the back.

Once again they have learnt the hard way that no team can make basic errors like they did against Turkey and expect to get away with them.

Before the game a minute's silence was impeccably observed in memory of the thousands of victims of the Turkish earthquake.

The hush was then broken as Turkey's noisy following made their presence felt.

Michael Hughes almost silenced them when he whizzed a 35-yard free-kick just wide before Peter Kennedy sliced a shot wide from a good position on the edge of the area.

Northern Ireland continued to cause problems for the Turkish defence and Jon McCarthy, preferred again to Keith Gillespie on the right, nodded the ball down for Kennedy to mishit his shot wide.

Turkey's dangerman Hakan Sukur shrugged off a muscle injury to play and the Galatasaray striker was just inches away from connecting with Tayfun Korkut's inviting cross.

The visitors continued to press and they almost opened the scoring from a swift counter-attack on 17 minutes.

Arif released Hakan, who played the ball back for Arif to crack a 30-yard drive against the face of the crossbar, although Irish goalkeeper Maik Taylor may have got a touch.

Northern Ireland were matching the group leaders stride for stride at Windsor and Kennedy was not far away with an overhead kick from the edge of the area, which dropped just behind the Turkish goal.

Barry Hunter played Iain Dowie through on the left, but the lumbering striker delayed a second too long and a defender got back to take the sting out of his shot.

Mark Williams became the first player to be booked when he chopped down Arif and then flattened Tugay Kerimoglu on the halfway line.



The Irish threatened again and Turkish goalkeeper Rustu Recber beat Kennedy to McCarthy's pass and when the ball rebounded to Dowie, Rustu saved at his feet.

Back came the Turks and Hunter did well to deflect Hakan's shot from Seren Yalcin's pass wide for a corner.

Then just when the home side thought they would go in all-square at the interval, Seren played Arif through on the left with a defence-splitting pass and he slotted the ball past Taylor.

Turkey hit Northern Ireland with a second goal after the restart. A mix-up between Aaron Hughes and Steve Lomas gifted the Turks possession and Yalcin quickly fed Hakan.

He in turn played in Arif who scored an almost carbon-copy of his first goal.

Arif wasn't finished and in the 49th minute he completed one of the fastest hat-tricks in international football.

Ogun Temizkanoglu played the ball up to him and he casually chipped Taylor with Northern Ireland appealing in vain for offside.

The home side gamely kept plugging away and Michael Hughes curled a free-kick narrowly wide from 25 yards out.

Gillespie replaced McCarthy after 63 minutes, but there was little he could do by this stage.

Lomas managed to muster two weak efforts, which were easily gathered by Rustu and instead it was Turkey who came closest to scoring again when Tayfur Havutcu shot wide with the goal at his mercy.

The final whistle confirmed Northern Ireland's 100th home defeat in international competition and to compound the Irish Football Association's woe the attendance was a pitiful 7,270 - nearly 3,000 fewer than the gate for Glentoran's Belfast derby with Linfield last Tuesday.

Northern Ireland: Taylor, Horlock, Williams, Hunter, A. Hughes, Kennedy, Lennon, Lomas, McCarthy (Gillespie 63), M. Hughes, Dowie (Quinn 77).

Turkey: Rustu, Alpay, Ogun, Besener, Abdullah (Unsa 75), Tugay, Tayfur, Seren (Karak 30), Tayfun, Arif (Buruk 79), Hakan.

Goals: Arif 45, 46, 49.

Crowd: 7,270

GERMANS IN STRUGGLE



Oliver Bierhoff showing how many goals he scored

Finland 1 Germany 2

Oliver Bierhoff scored the first goal after less than two minutes and added another in the 16th to lead Germany over Finland 2-1 Saturday in a Euro 2000 Group 3 qualifier.

The victory gave Germany a share of the group lead with 15 points, each with two games remaining. Only the winner is assured of advancing to the European Championship finals next year.

Bierhoff corralled a half-clearance from the Finnish defense, closed on goal and fired the ball under goalkeeper Antti Niemi, who hesitated in cutting the angle.

Fourteen minutes later, Bierhoff again benefited from a clearance. He struck the volley from the right as Toni Kuivasto's header did not clear the ball far enough.

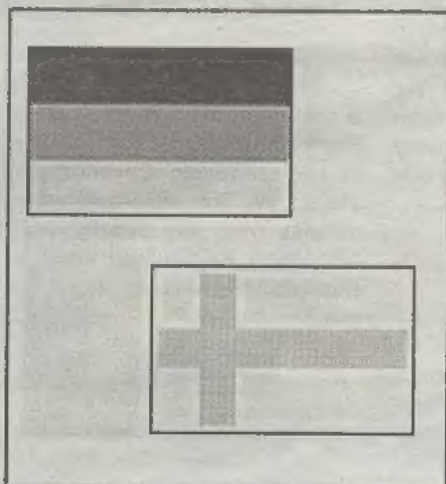
Both Germany's goals came after good runs and crosses from elusive winger Oliver Neuville.

Neuville came close to scoring himself in the 42nd minute, but hit the near post.

After the interval, Germany grew a bit lethargic, and goalkeeper Jens Lehmann, who

played unsteadily nearly equalized in the throughout, had to fling himself to save a header from Sami Hyypia low at the post in the 53rd

84th. Lehmann twice threw his body to stop Johansson's close-in header and Mika Kottila



minute.

In the 63rd, Finland scored after Jarkko Wiss swerved a free kick into the penalty area and Jonatan Johansson stretched to deflect the ball off the post. Finnish defender Janne Salli pounced on the rebound, sending the ball into the roof of the net in his first full game for Finland.

Germany stepped up its intensity after the setback, but Finland

on the rebound.

For Germany, Lothar Matthaeus, 38, played his 140th international, three shy of the record held by Swedish goalkeeper Thomas Ravelli. Bierhoff, Neuville and Jens Jeremies played well for Germany, while Teemu Tainio, a 19-year-old from Auxerre in the French League, was the revelation in the Finnish team.

Finland: Antti Niemi, (Pasi Laaksonen, 46th); Janne Salli, Toni Kuivasto, Sami Hyypia, Jarmo Saastamoinen, Harri Ylonen (Shefki Kuqi, 48th); Aki Riihilahti, Jarkko Wiss; Teemu Tainio; Mika Kottila, Jonatan Johansson.

Germany: Jens Lehmann; Lothar Matthaeus; Markus Babbel; Jens Nowotny; Thomas Linke; Jens Jeremies; Christian Ziege; Mehmet Scholl (Christian Nerlinger, 79th); Oliver Neuville (Thomas Strunz, 84th); Oliver Bierhoff; Ulf Kirsten (Bernd Schneider, 31st).

DANES STILL HOPING TO QUALIFY

Denmark 2 Switzerland 1

Second-half goals from Allan Nielsen and John Dahl Tomasson gave Denmark a 2-1 victory over Switzerland, keeping alive Danish hopes of qualifying for next year's European Championship.

Denmark pressed forward relentlessly in a fast-paced opening half hour, Martin Joergensen firing a dangerously placed free kick over the bar in the fourth minute.

As Switzerland settled, Parick Buehlmann saw an attempt smothered by veteran Danish keeper Peter Schmeichel in the 25th.

Denmark attacked again from the beginning of the second half. Nielsen opened the scoring in the 54th minute, taking advantage of confusion in the Swiss defense to score from close range.

In the 79th, Switzerland forced in an equalizer, Kubilay Tuerkylmaz putting in the rebound after Ciriaco Sforza's shot bounced off the bar.

But Tomasson restored Denmark's lead barely two minutes later in an immediate counter-attack.

Both sides went into the match six points behind Group 1 leader Italy, and both wanted a victory to take a grip on second place in the group. The game was watched by 41,667 spectators at a packed Parken stadium.

Denmark faces Italy in Naples tomorrow, while Switzerland will play Belarus at home.

The Swiss, who held Italy to a 0-0 draw at home in their last qualifying match, have



Denmark's Peter Schmeichel

a game in hand. They wrap up their qualifying campaign in Wales next month.

Denmark: Peter Schmeichel, Thomas Helveg, Rene Henriksen, Jes Hoegh, Jan Heintze, Bjarne Goldbaek (Soeren Colding, 51st minute), Stif Toefling, Allan Nielsen, Martin Joergensen, Ebbe Sand (Morten Wieghorst, 87th), John Dahl Tomasson.

Switzerland: Stefan Huber, Patrick Mueller, Mac Hodel, Raphael Wicky (Thomas Wyss, 90th), Sebastien Jeanneret, Johann Vogel, Ciriaco Sforza, Francesco di Jorio (Kubilay Tuerkylmaz, 60th), David Sesa (Sascha Mueller, 78th), Stephane Chapuisat, Patrick Buehlmann.

SWEDEN ALMOST THERE

Sweden 1 Bulgaria 0

Niclas Alexandersson came off the bench to give Sweden a 1-0 victory over an undermanned Bulgarian team, putting it within a victory of qualifying for the 2000 European Championship.

The victory gave unbeaten Sweden a four-point lead over Poland and England in the standings and requiring it only to beat lightly regarded Luxembourg tomorrow for place in next year's finals.

Sweden has a four point lead over both Poland and England. Sweden and Poland have played six games while England has played seven. While Sweden faces Luxembourg, England and Poland face off in Warsaw.

Alexandersson entered the game in the 62nd minute for Arsenal striker Fredrik Ljungberg, who limped off with a strained ankle after being fouled by Milen Patkov. The Bulgarian was sent off in the incident.

About 90 seconds later, Kennet Andersson set up Alexandersson's close range-goal, his fourth in 37 internationals for Sweden.

"It was the first time I touched the ball after leaving the bench," Alexandersson said. "What a great goal. We had so many chances, but couldn't finish the attacks."

Sweden could have won by a much bigger margin, with 18 clear scoring chances. Swedish goalkeeper Magnus Hedman, who has not lost a game in 17 appearances since his 1997 debut, had one of the easiest games of his career and didn't make a single save in the game that drew a sellout Rasunda Stadium crowd of 35,640.

Andersson and Hakan Mild, both members of the 1994 World Cup side that finished third in the United States by beating



Sweden's Jesper Blomqvist

Bulgaria 4-0 in the bronze-medal game, each hit the post with headers in the 27th and 42nd minutes respectively.

Once in each half, Bulgarian defenders cleared the ball off the line, both headers by Henrik Larsson and Andersson.

"We had an incredible amount of scoring chances," Swedish coach Tommy Soderberg said. "Either we hit the woodwork or just missed the target. Patience was very important for us today."



Croatia ... striving for a spot in Euro 2000

Davor Suker, top scorer at World Cup '98, scored an injury-time winner against Ireland on Saturday to put Croatia back to the top of its European Championship qualifying group in a 1-0 victory.

The Irish had gone to the top after beating Yugoslavia 2-1 in Dublin last Wednesday and appeared to be hanging onto the top spot. But Arsenal striker Suker netted the winner with a goal in the third minute of injury time in Zagreb.

The result gives Croatia 14 points from seven games and Ireland 12 from six. Yugoslavia can jump into second place on Sunday by beating Macedonia at home and drop the Irish to third.

Three goals in four minutes by Turkey's Erdem Arif against Northern Ireland put huge pressure on defending champions Germany.

Arif's hat-trick at Windsor Park, Belfast gave Turkey a 3-0 victory in Group 3, and the Turks stayed neck and neck with Germany on 15 points. Early strikes by AC Milan's Oliver Bierhoff gave the Germans a 2-1 win over Finland in Helsinki, and Germany would have known the Turkish result by the time they took the field.

The Turkish forward struck first just before halftime and then added goals in the first and fourth minutes of the second period as his team cruised to a victory over Lawrie McMenemy's team, which was already out of contention.

"I think the group will come down to the last game between us and Germany in Munich," said Turkey's coach, Mustafa Denizli. "Before that I wish the Irish team well in Dortmund against the Germans on Wednesday and I hope they can do well for themselves and us."

Bierhoff scored in the second and 17th minutes as the Germans took control in Helsinki before Janne Salli scared them with a 63rd minute strike for the Finns.

The games were among 20 Euro 2000 qualifying matches on Saturday with two more on Sunday and the next round tomorrow night.

By then, it might become clearer who joins the Czech Republic - the 1996 runner-up - and hosts Belgium and the Netherlands in the finals. The Czechs are already the runaway winner of Group 9 and were the first to qualify.

England is hoping for a place in the runners up playoffs and a first ever hat-trick for his country by team captain Alan Shearer helped his team to a 6-0 victory over soccer minnow

Luxembourg at Wembley.

Steve McManaman also scored his first two goals in England colors after 24 scoreless appearances, and the second was a rare header for the Real Madrid winger.

But the best of the six was a curling shot from just outside the corner of the area by substitute Michael Owen in the third minute of injury time.

Owen, hailed as the new superstar of English soccer especially after standout performances and goals at last year's World Cup, has only just returned to action after four months absence with a hamstring injury and had barely played for his club, Liverpool.

The result put England level on points with Poland in the battle for second place behind Sweden, which is almost sure of finishing top after beating Bulgaria 1-0 on a goal by substitute Niclas Alexandersson.

"It was the first time I touched the ball after leaving the bench," Alexandersson said. "What a great goal. We had so many chances, but couldn't finish the attacks."

Poland and England meet tomorrow when the Swedes can clinch qualification by beating Luxembourg.

The return of Zinedine Zidane helped World Cup holder France gain a hard earned 0-0 tie with Ukraine in France as the Group 4 standings got even tighter.

Russia downed Armenia 2-0 and Iceland scored a 3-0 victory over Andorra and that means the four teams are separated by one point with two rounds to go. Ukraine has 16 points and France, Russia and Iceland have 15.

Group 2 leader Norway edged Greece 1-0 to win for the sixth Euro 2000 game in a row and another home victory over Slovenia tomorrow will clinch a place in the finals. Steffen Iversen set up the only goal for his Tottenham teammate Oyvind Leonardsen in the 34th minute.

Spain, already two points clear atop Group 6, moved five points ahead with a 3-1 victory over Austria in Vienna with defender Fernando Hierro scoring for both teams in a six-minute spell. Israel hopes to cut that lead back to two by beating Cyprus on Sunday.

Denmark edged Switzerland 2-1 in Copenhagen to cut Italy's Group 1 lead to three points. Wales, being coached for the first time by former Manchester United and Barcelona star Mark Hughes, came from behind to score a 2-1 victory at Belarus and has an

outside chance of qualifying.

The Czech Republic, already sure of qualifying, scored a 4-0 win at Lithuania with two goals each from Pavel Nedved and Jan Koller, while Scotland remained in contention for the runners up spot with a 2-1 win at Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Portugal, which went into its Group 7 game as standings leader, could only tie 1-1 with Azerbaijan. That game was halted at halftime on Friday night because of a floodlight failure and was replayed on Saturday.

The nine group winners and the runner up with the best record qualify automatically, while the eight other runners up go into a playoff.

Group 1

Belarus 1, Wales 2

Vasily Baranov, who plays in Russia for Spartak Moscow, fired Belarus ahead in the 30th but veteran striker Dean Saunders leveled three minutes before half time and Manchester United star Ryan Giggs netted the Welsh winner four minutes from the end.

Denmark 2, Switzerland 1

Allan Nielsen opened the scoring in the 54th minute, taking advantage of confusion in the Swiss defense to score from close range. In the 79th, Switzerland forced in an equalizer, Kubilay Tuerkyilmaz putting in the rebound after Ciriaco Sforza's shot bounced off the bar. But Jon Dahl Tomasson restored Denmark's lead barely two minutes later in an immediate counter-attack.

Group 2

Norway 1, Greece 0

Oyvind Leonardsen took a pass from fellow Spurs player Steffen Iversen to fire the only goal in the 34th minute for Norway's sixth win in a row.

Albania 3, Latvia 3

Latvia's Vitalijs Astafjevs connected in the 10th minute and Alban Bushi equalized in the 28th. Astafjevs made it 2-1 in the 62nd minute, scoring his ninth goal in the many games for his national side and, three minutes later, Andrejs Stolicers added a third. Bushi scored his second goal in the 78th minute and substitute Devi Muka made it 3-3 in the final minute of the match.

Slovenia 2, Georgia 1

Milenko Acimovic gave Slovenia a 48th minute lead before Shota Arveladze leveled seven minutes later. Zlatko Zahovic hit the winner 11 minutes from the end to keep Slovenia in second place behind Norway.

Group 3

Nth Ireland 0, Turkey 3

At Belfast, Erdem Arif, who

had scored only three goals in his previous 28 internationals, struck in first-half injury time. He added goals in the first and fourth minutes of the second period to give the Turks a fifth victory in six games.

Finland 1, Germany 2

Oliver Bierhoff gave the Germans the lead in the second minute after the Finns failed to clear and volleyed the second in the 17th after Toni Kuivasto's headed clearance dropped to him. Janne Salli replied in the 63rd, scoring from the rebound after Jonatan Johansson had deflected a free kick by Jarkko Wiss onto the post.

Group 4

Ukraine 0, France 0

Zinedine Zidane returned after a four-game absence to bolster the French attack and was foiled by a 22nd minutes save by Oleksandr Shovkovskiy. The French came under more pressure and Andriy Shevchenko of AC Milan fired a curling 25-yard free kick just wide.

Iceland 3, Andorra 0

Iceland took a 2-0 lead by halftime via goals from Thordur Gudjonsson in the 28th minute and Hermann Hreifarson four minutes later. Substitute striker Eidur Snari Gudjohnsen scored the clincher in injury time.

Russia 2, Armenia 0

Russia made it five wins in a row under coach Oleg Romantsev who took after three losses. Vladimir Beschastnyk scored the first after only eight minutes from the penalty spot and Valery Karpin fired home a Beschastnyk cross in the 70th minute.

Group 5

England 6, Luxembourg 0

Alan Shearer fired England ahead from the penalty spot in the 11th minute and fired the second in the 28th. Steve McManaman scored his first two minutes later, Shearer completed his hat-trick in the 35th and McManaman's header two minutes before half time made it 5-0 by the interval. Substitute Michael Owen netted the sixth in injury time with a spectacular curling shot from outside the corner of the area.

Sweden 1, Bulgaria 0

Bulgaria's Milen Petkov was expelled for serious foul play in the 59th minute after fouling Fredrik Ljungberg. Five minutes later, substitute Niclas Alexandersson, replacing Ljungberg, slid the ball home at the far post from a low cross by Kennet Andersson.

Group 6

Austria 1, Spain 3

Raul Gonzalez gave the Spaniards a 23rd minute lead,

Group 7

Slovakia 1, Romania 5

Sabin Ilic gave the Romanians a sixth minute lead but Vladimir Labant leveled in the 22nd. But veteran forward Gheorghe Hagi restored the Romanians' lead before half time, Liviu Ciobotariu added a third midway through the second half and Viorel Moldovan netted twice more in the final two minutes.

Liechtenst 0, Hungary 0

Hungary threatened in the second half, but were kept out by 17-year-old Liechtenstein 'keeper Peter Jehle. Miklos Lendvai hit the post just after the break, while Gyoergy Korsos and Bella Illes failed to net promising shots.

Group 8

Croatia 1, Ireland 0

Fielding just one striker, 37-year-old Tony Cascarino, the Irish came under heavy pressure throughout the game in Zagreb and created few chances - in marked contrast to its thrilling victory over Yugoslavia in Dublin three days earlier. They were punished when Davor Suker, who missed a penalty playing for Arsenal last week, scored Croatia's winner in the third minute of injury time.

Group 9

Faeroe Island 0, Estonia 2

Martin Reim, a striker who plays for Kotkan TP in the Finnish League, connected with a free kick from 24 yards to put Estonia ahead in the 88th minute. With only seconds remaining, defender Raio Piiroja beat goalkeeper Jakup Mikkelsen with a header after a corner kick. The Faeroe Islands have not won any of their eight games and are last in the standings with three points after three draws.

Lithuania 0, Czech Rep 4

Two goals in three minutes by Lazio's Pavel Nedved in the 60th and 63rd minutes was followed by a third by Jan Koller in the 68th. Koller then added a fourth in the final seconds.

Bosnia 1, Scotland 2

Don Hutchinson fired the Scots ahead in the 13th minute but a breakaway goal by Elvir Bolic in the 22nd brought the home team level. Billy Dodds regained the lead for Scotland with a goal in the final minute of the second half.

FRANCE NEEDS LUCK TO QUALIFY

Ukraine held world champions France to a 0-0 draw in an uneventful qualifier to maintain their narrow lead in European championship group four last Saturday. The draw leaves Ukraine top of the group with 16 points followed by Russia, Iceland and France.

Ukraine are away to Iceland tomorrow while Andorra play Russia and France travel to Armenia.

The group is the tightest of the nine qualifiers and apart from Armenia and Andorra who are eliminated, is wide open. It was no surprise that the two sides saw the scoreless draw totally opposite.

"Honestly, we're quite happy with the outcome," Ukraine assistant coach, Vladimir Veremeyev, said.

"We're still the top after tonight's matches, so obviously our chances of qualifying remain very good."

Veremeyev said coach Josef Sabo was so nervous watching his team that he came down with chest pains in the final minutes.

Meanwhile, French coach Roger Lemerre was very disappointed to come away with just a point.

"We had a sizeable advantage throughout but were unlucky and couldn't capitalise on it," he said. Lemerre tried to be diplomatic about his team's chances to go through to the Euro 2000 finals.

"It didn't change much," he said. "We had four teams bunched at the top and now we still have the same teams there."

"However, Ukraine's fate now is in the hands of Russia while ours is in Iceland's hands," he conceded.

Russia host Ukraine on October 9, the final date in the qualifiers, while France play Iceland.

The French side, aided by the return of playmaker Zinedine Zidane, pressed for much of the 90 minutes but could not find a way through a tight Ukraine defence.

The World Footballer of the Year, who played in the French side for the first time for nearly six months, was the most active player on the pitch, coming close on a couple of occa-

sions.

Zidane's low shot just missed the post on the stroke of halftime. Ten minutes into the second half he fired a long range effort which deflected off Arsenal defender Oleh Luzhny and sailed over the bar.

However, another returnee, Nicolas Anelka, who also missed France's friendly against Northern Ireland last month, was mostly ineffective and was taken off after 55 minutes.

"We knew that Nicolas is not a 100 per cent ready to play 90 minutes, so his substitution wasn't a surprise," the coach said.

The Ukrainians were content to stay back and take their chances in rare counter-attacks but their fast strikers, Andriy Shevchenko and Serhiy Rebrov, were kept well in check by the French.

"We had problems in this game because not all of our players had the same level of physical fitness," conceded Veremeyev.

Spain took a step nearer next year's European Championship finals when they beat Austria 3-1 in their group six qualifier last Saturday for their eighth successive triumph under coach Jose Antonio Camacho.

Six months after thrashing Austria 9-0 in Valencia, Spain clinched the double over their opponents with goals from Raul (22), Fernando Hierro (56) and Luis Enrique (88). Hierro put through his own net for Austria's goal in the 49th minute.

Austria had their chances though and Christian Mayrleb went close twice when his shot hit the post in the 18th minute and he headed just over the bar two minutes later.

Raul, who scored four times in the 9-0 victory last March, opened the scoring in the 22nd minute when he scored after a shot bounced out of Arsenal goalkeeper Alex Manninger's arms.

Hierro put through his own net four minutes into the second half before making it 2-1 for the hosts with a free-kick which went over the Austrian wall. Luis Enrique completed the scoring two minutes from time to give Spain 15 points from their six matches.

Austria, with just a home match against Cyprus to come now only have an outside chance of finishing even second.

Luis Figo saved Portugal from an embarrassing and damaging defeat with an injury time equaliser for a 1-1 draw with Azerbaijan in Saturday's replayed Euro 2000 qualifier.

The Barcelona playmaker took advantage of a scramble near the Azeri goal and fired home at the third attempt deep into five-minutes of injury time.

Portugal have 19 points from eight matches, Romania 17 from seven. Romania and Portugal meet in Bucharest tomorrow. Azerbaijan remained second from the bottom with four points.

The original match on Friday was abandoned at halftime with the score 0-0 due to a floodlight failure.

However, Portugal coach Humberto Coelho refused to blame the circumstances for his team's poor showing.

"It's a game," he said. "We didn't have the advantage on Friday either when the match was stopped at halftime."

"I think we just paid the price for being over-confident while the home side played really well," he added.

The Portuguese were a better side in the first half but had few chances to beat Azeri goalkeeper Dmitry Kramarenko.

Zaur Tagizade put Azerbaijan ahead in the 51st minute when the visitors were caught off guard by a failed offside trap.

The Portuguese were lucky not to fall further behind when Vyacheslav Lychkin had Baia beaten but his powerful 20 metre shot came off the crossbar in the 75th minute.

In the later stages Portugal began an all out assault as they desperately searched for an equaliser.

They were helped when Tagizade was sent off by English referee Dermot Gallagher for a bad tackle from behind six minutes from time.

Finally, Figo capitalised on a poor clearance and beat Kramarenko from close range.

ARGENTINA WIN FIRST GAME

Argentina 2 Brazil 0

Juan Sebastian Veron and Hernan Crespo scored a goal apiece to give Argentina a 2-0 victory over Brazil in the first of two friendly "Superclassicos" between the South American powers.

With a break in European league play for Euro 2000 qualifying, both sides recalled their top players, including Ronaldo, Rivaldo, and Roberto Carlos for Brazil and Claudio Lopez for Argentina.

Only lead striker Gabriel Batistuta was absent, who stayed behind in Italy, where he plays for Fiorentina, to nurse a knee injury.

The match seemed destined to disappoint after the opening minutes as neither team looked to vigorously attack.

Roberto Carlos put a blast into the hands of Argentine goalkeeper Roberto Bonano in one of Brazil's few attacks during the game's opening 30 minutes. A header by Argentina's Roberto Ayala also went wide.

The pace intensified in the 30th minute, when a streaking Ortega found Veron with a short pass. Veron's rocket from well outside the box caught Brazilian goalkeeper Dida off guard, skimming across the ground before finding the back of the net.

Argentina used the goal to calm itself, controlling the ball only slight better than Brazil, whose biggest threats, Ronaldo and Rivaldo, struggled to find their rhythm.



Juan Sebastian Veron

The best play came in the 58th minute as Argentina's Juan Sorin dashed up the left side to find Christian Gonzalez cutting to the goal. Gonzalez softly laid the ball to a sliding Crespo, who tapped the ball past Dida.

Trailing 2-0, Brazil pushed forward repeatedly, creating spaces for quick Argentine counter attacks. Argentina peppered Brazil's goal with a handful of good chances late in the second half.

Brazil will have the opportunity to redeem themselves today in the second match in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Argentina: Roberto Bonano, Nelson Vivas, Roberto Ayala, Walter Samuel, Javier Zanetti, Juan Sorin, Fernando Redondo, Juan Veron (Diego Simeone, 86th minute), Ariel Ortega (Marcelo Gallardo, 75th), Hernan Crespo (Eduardo Berizzo, 89th), Claudio Lopez (Christian Gonzalez, 46th).

Brazil: Dida, Cafu, Antonio Carlos, Scheidt, Roberto Carlos, Vampeta (Marcos Assuncao, 46th), Emerson (Alex, 46th), Ze Roberto, Rivaldo, Ronaldo, Ronaldinho (Elber, 46th).

TEN GOAL THRILLER

Holland 5 Belgium 5

Patrick Kluivert scored three for the Netherlands, but Emile Mpenza had the last for Belgium in the 77th, resulting in a 5-5 draw between the European Championship co-hosts that saw 10 yellow cards, one red and a lot of bad tempers.

Branko Strupar, a naturalized Croatian striker, had two for Belgium in the first 29 minutes, while Edgar Davids had a pair for the Dutch in the final 15 minutes of the half.

Strupar scored in the eighth and 29th minutes, the first a powerful volley after Emile Mpenza knocked on Gert Verheyen's cross. The second was an arching header just inside the post off a Mpenze cross.

Davids' first goal in the 36th came after free kick rebounded off the Belgian wall to him, and he bounced a shot past off-balanced keeper Philippe Vandewalle.

His second came after he beat four defenders into the area and finished his solo with the outside of his left boot.

Kluivert gave the Netherlands a 3-2 lead just before halftime, following Dennis Bergkamp's chip that was parried.

The Belgians rallied on goals by Bart Goor in the 50th and Marc Wilmots in the 52nd. But Kluivert then scored twice to



Ives Vander Haeghe and Ruud Van Nistelroij

restore the Dutch lead only to have Mpenza draw Belgium even once more.

Belgium had to hold off the Netherlands for the final 13 minutes after Wilmots was shown a red card in the 77th.

Netherlands: Edwin van der Sar, Jaap Stam (Bert Konterman, 62nd minute), Frank de Boer, Michael Reiziger, Phillip Cocu, Giovanni van Bronckhorst, Ronald de Boer, Edgar Davids, Patrick Kluivert (Pierre van Hooijdonk, 78th), Dennis Bergkamp (Ruud Van Nistelrooy, 66th), Boudewijn Zenden.

Belgium: Philippe Vandewalle (Frederic Herpoel, 41st), Eric Deflandre (Karl Hoefkens, 79th), Lorenzo Staelens, Jacky Peeters, Nico van Kerckhoven (Mark Hendriks, 73rd), Bart Goor, Yves Vanderhaeghe, Gert Verheyen (Toine Brogno, 89th), Marc Wilmots, Emile Mpenza (Johan Walem, 82nd), Branko Strupar.

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